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FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

Man and Woman: An Old Story
Leon R. Kass

Abortion and the Actualized Self
Camille S. Williams

Poverty & the Victim Ploy
William Voegeli

When Jews Are Christians
David Novak

The Present and Future Church
Wolfhart Pannenberg

Also: Is Egalitarianism Good for the Jews?
Making Democratic Waves • Islam After Kipling

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Correspondence

Defending Atheists

I rubbed my eyes in disbelief as I read Richard John Neuhaus' contentious article, "Can Atheists Be Good Citizens?" (August/September) I hope that this is not the opening salvo by neoconservatives to deny nonbelievers their legitimate rights as citizens. To maintain that the criterion of being a "good citizen" is that a person have an "ultimate allegiance" to the City of God may lead to a new form of bigotry and intolerance. In the past, Mormons were not considered good citizens because they practiced polygamy, Jehovah's Witnesses because they would not salute the flag, Quakers because they were pacifists, and Roman Catholics because it was thought they held a higher fealty to the Vatican.

Historically, large numbers of theists who believed in the Fatherhood of God did not believe in democracy, but in the divine right of kings, aristocracy, oligarchy, even dictatorship. Today hundreds of millions of Muslims believe in God yet have no commitment to ordered liberty or democracy. [For their part,] most atheists are good citizens and have a deep loyalty to our constitutional liberties. Perhaps 8 to 10 percent of the American population may be considered atheists or agnostics, and 40 percent of Americans are unchurched. If we were to follow Mr. Neuhaus' logic we might have to read out [of society] a great number of fellow Americans.

Mr. Neuhaus does not wish to include Sidney Hook with the atheists, and he writes that Hook was an "agnostic." Having known Sidney Hook and worked closely with him for over forty years, I can assure you that Sidney considered himself an atheist. The burden of proof, he said, rested with someone who made a claim (e.g., that mermaids exist. Or the Tooth Fairy. Or God.). If one could not find sufficient evidence or good reasons to support the claim, one might consider oneself an unbeliever—in Hook's case, an atheist. Please, Mr. Neuhaus, do not impugn the loyalty or good citizenship of

millions of Americans just because they do not share your theistic outlook.

Paul Kurtz
Free Inquiry
Buffalo, NY

Richard John Neuhaus' article was both shallow and unfair. He offers no evidence whatever that atheists or nontheists in the aggregate are worse citizens than traditional theists. Are nontheists less patriotic, less honest, less involved in the political process, less dependable, less hard-working, less devoted to spouse and children, less neighborly, less ethical? Not a shred of empirical evidence does he present.

Poll data suggest that about one-third of Americans (and probably a larger percentage of Europeans) see no good reason to include in their worldview a belief in a personal, prayer-answering, intervening-in-history deity. These people are not philosophers, but people of all classes, educational levels, and walks of life who try to live ethical, meaningful lives as individuals and as citizens of Boston or Barcelona, New England or Catalonia, the U.S. or Spain, the world. Yet few describe themselves as "atheists," a negative term that conveys no information about what one values or tries to live one's life by.

Neuhaus' division of humankind into theists (the good guys) and atheists (the not-so-good guys) is, to repeat, shallow and unfair. It would be more useful to position people along a continuum, measuring their commitment to the highest ethical values, democracy, civil liberties and human rights, social responsibility, reason, caring, etc. In the real world, theists, Christians, Jews, Humanists, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, nontheists, etc. would be scattered from one end of the continuum to the other.

Edd Doerr
American Humanist Association
Amherst, NY

An atheist cannot be a good citizen.

So Arkansas, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina are correct in requiring that holders of public office must believe in a supreme being, because an atheist might do what Christians do, such as steal from the public like Rev. Jim Bakker, have a little sexual fun like Rev. Jimmy Swaggart, prey on gullible followers like Rev. Oral Roberts, have an affair like Archbishop Eugene Marino, sexually molest children like Father Gilbert Gauthe and Father Thomas Chleboski, defend a fraudulent rape like Rev. Al Sharpton, undermine the Constitution like Richard Nixon, lie to Congress like Oliver North, take bribes like Spiro Agnew, give bribes like Charles Keating, keep an astrologer like Ronald Reagan, violate the international law like William Casey, harass civil rights groups like J. Edgar Hoover, accept bankers' largesse like Fernand St Germain, manipulate funds like Speaker Jim Wright, and so on for a few hundred million more?

It certainly is time for some Christians to dump their supercilious self-righteousness.

Hugo Borresen
Alexandria, VA

Richard John Neuhaus responds:

The article in question explicitly stated that atheists are citizens and, unlike many theists, are often exemplary citizens in many respects. They cannot, however, be *good* citizens in the sense that good citizens must be able to give a morally compelling account of this constitutional order in continuity with its constituting beliefs. I suggest Mr. Kurtz et al. rub their eyes again and read the article. There is no disagreement whatever that some atheists are in their personal and public behavior morally superior to some theists.

Defending Russell Kirk

Conservatism has always been an inclusive movement eschewing the legalism of big central government in favor of liberty both for the individual and for freely constituted

communities of individuals. James Nuechterlein's neoconservative polemic masquerading as a book review ("The Paleo's Paleo," August/September) would diminish the inclusiveness by demanding a political correctness that would exclude not just Russell Kirk but a large number of intelligent, classical conservatives.

In suggesting that Kirk cannot accept that "the major tradition to be preserved is classical liberalism . . . more specifically, . . . the American regime of bourgeois democratic capitalism," Nuechterlein errs as to the true American tradition and misapprehends Dr. Kirk. America has become a bourgeois democratic capitalism but its tradition is one of republican parochialism. And whether or not Mr. Nuechterlein likes that tradition, a long history of uniquely American ethnic and religious communities attests to its vitality. Dr. Kirk's misgivings about democratic capitalism as it exists in modern-day America apply more to the increasingly oppressive federal bureaucracy required to impose it on communities with whose nature it is incompatible than it does to capitalists who love the rat race and freely choose that way of life.

Finally, Mr. Nuechterlein's derision of Russell Kirk for using T. S. Eliot's phrase "the permanent things" seems hypocritical coming from the editor of a journal called *FIRST THINGS*. If *FIRST THINGS* is not big enough to include a place for the permanent things, then *FIRST THINGS* has become too small. Perhaps Mr. Nuechterlein objects to any use of a T. S. Eliot phrase; more likely he objects to the notion that the neoconservative doctrine of democratic capitalism is not only not the major tradition of America but is, as Dr. Kirk suggests, a major cause of the decline of republican virtue in American life.

Tom Blair
San Pedro, CA

There are many criticisms to be made of *The Conservative Constitution* by Russell Kirk, and many of them have been made in sundry journals, though not as superficially and as

personally as in James Nuechterlein's review. Indeed, of the ten paragraphs devoted to assessing Dr. Kirk's work, barely one is devoted actually to presenting fully and examining critically the theses of the book under review. Instead, the reviewer contents himself and confines *FIRST THINGS'* readers to creative but ultimately unhelpful (if not untruthful) caricatures of the author.

Chief among the review's complaints is that there is an "American reality" with which conservatives of the persuasion enunciated for many years by Russell Kirk and others have "very little to do"; thus does Mr. Nuechterlein express the dismissive sentiment that appeals in 1991 to "the permanent things" render their champions "little more than curiosities." Are your readers to conclude that accommodation to the "reality" of the present era is necessary to intellectual integrity and discourse, and that recourse to the country's founding document or its original customs and conventions (the actual thrust of Dr. Kirk's book) is but an oddity?

In the foregoing paragraph, your correspondent has offered more direct quotations from the review than the pseudo-review of *The Conservative Constitution* offered from the book. Hardly more comprehensive is the reviewer's synopsis of Dr. Kirk's treatise, which confessedly is a patchwork of fifteen lectures, a synopsis necessary apparently only to permit the declaration that "the major [American—though not demonstrably constitutional] tradition . . . is classical liberalism." The reviewer's hastiness in this regard leads to several errors, among them the statement that ours is a regime of "bourgeois democratic capitalism," a regime of which Kirk, it is suggested, is "scornful." On the contrary, Kirk has elsewhere written convincingly of the merits of bourgeois life; the burden of his writing is, rather, that the bourgeois age is, lamentably, gone, and has been supplanted by a post-bourgeois regime directed by various managerial elites that are indifferent if not antagonistic to constitutional restraints and the

underlying (conservative) dispositions of the American people. This very point, which is central to (again citing the review) “those of a reactionary bent,” has been made in major works by at least two of FIRST THINGS’ own editorial advisors.

Nuechterlein is correct at least in insisting that Kirk is not successful in demonstrating convincingly that Edmund Burke exercised a decisive influence on the American founders, though he does not point out that Kirk does appear successful in arguing that Montesquieu and Hume were more influential—if usually without attribution—than Locke. But Nuechterlein is guilty of at least as serious an unreality as Kirk may be of Burke when he leaps to the pronunciamiento that democratic capitalism is the genuine contemporary expression of the original American tradition. Many an Antifederalist, and many a Federalist, too, would against such a claim be as aggressively “resistant to modernity” and also as eloquently given to the Tory Harrumph as is Russell Kirk.

David A. Bovenizer
Vice President & Senior Editor
Regnery Gateway
Washington, D.C.

Kidnapping the Pope?

Your editorial (“That Encyclical,” August/September) saying that *Centesimus Annus* is a strong endorsement of capitalism seems to be part and parcel of a general attempt by the neoconservative faction in the United States to kidnap the Pope. It won’t work, any more than did the efforts of some liberal theologians to make Jesus Christ a Marxist.

The encyclical sums itself up on economic systems by saying: “The church has no models to present.” Are we to take it that there is in that plain, straightforward statement some papal casuistry that hides a strong endorsement of capitalism?

As for the merits of capitalism, or “new capitalism” (whatever is that?), John Paul says: It all depends! What does one mean by “capitalism”? The Pope says a market economy is to be condemned unless it is “circum-

scribed within a strong juridical framework.” He makes clear that he is talking about governmental limits on free markets. Is your term “new capitalism” meant to include all those restrictions the pope demands? The pope deliberately and wisely said he would prefer not to describe what he favors as capitalism at all.

This encyclical is not a watershed in Catholic thinking on economic systems. It has by no means “shaken the foundations” of conventional Catholic wisdom. In fact—and the Pope makes this clear repeatedly throughout the encyclical—it is a restatement of the church’s conventional wisdom on the subject, going back one hundred years to *Rerum Novarum*, with an attempt to relate this thinking to a new scenario in Europe. That conventional wisdom, as taught in Catholic schools, study clubs, and universities for many years, is that Communism is inhuman, socialism is defective, and capitalism has some things to commend it, such as private property, but also has some very dangerous aspects that have caused grievous human suffering in the past and are still causing suffering in many places.

Because you took a jibe at the American bishops for their pastoral letter on the economy, it must be said that their document’s observations about capitalism are still true and have been proven true again by what has transpired in the U.S. financial world in the four years since that document was issued.

“Conventional wisdom” has not been overthrown. And why should it be if it is still valid?

Richard M. Harnett
S. San Francisco, CA

The Editors respond:

The reference to the “new capitalism,” a phrase that seems to puzzle Mr. Harnett, is not ours but is taken from the text of *Centesimus Annus*.

Postmodernism and Deconstruction

I felt a ripple of dissonance when I read Phillip E. Johnson’s statement: “Postmodernist philosophy is inher-

ently nihilistic and atheistic” (“Presbyterians for GLARE,” August/September). As a practicing Roman Catholic, I began to examine my personal variant postmodern philosophy for traces of meaninglessness and impiety. My dissonance passed quickly when I realized Johnson’s condemnation of postmodernism was excessive.

Johnson’s contention that postmodernists separate any text from the intentionality of its author is wrong. Deconstructionists do this, but not all postmodernists. The terms are not synonymous. All deconstructionists are postmodernists, but not all postmodernists are deconstructionists. . . .

One cannot actually practice literary deconstructionism in the *Lebenswelt*. Why buy a morning paper if texts have no meaning? On the other hand, deconstruction can be used as an analytic technique to tease out subtle significations of the text. Texts can be treated at a secondary level of analysis different from the first order analysis that looks at intentional meanings. Texts can be isolated solely as objects of research for reasons other than communication of authors’ meanings. . . .

Some brands of postmodern philosophy are nihilistic and atheistic. More to the point, they are misnamed and mere vehicles of political opportunism. First, the overwrought pursuit of absolute tolerance for, and acceptance of, sexual practices deemed perversions by Christian tradition is more appropriately identified as Enlightenment modernism and not, as Johnson would have it, postmodernism. Second, the demand for acceptance of homosexuality by Christian churches on the grounds of “fairness” and “tolerance” represents an attempt to capitalize on a rampant mindless egalitarianism that has polluted American society.

Other versions of postmodern philosophy are more congenial to traditional Christian teaching. The postmodernism that some of us propose has for decades attacked the dogmas of rationalism and “scientific” positivism, and has argued against the Cartesian heritage: a neurotic passion for certainty, a

sterile definition of rationality, and a fixation on method as the warrant for certainty.

More affirmatively, some kinds of postmodern philosophy conceive of objectivity and subjectivity not as separate orders of reality but as poles that delimit a field of experience within which understanding takes place. Applied to the matter of textual interpretation, this means that understanding occurs at the juncture between the author's intended meaning and the meaning projected into the text by the interpreter in the very act of reading.

Applied to the acceptance of homosexuality by Christian churches, this means that acceptance occurs at the interface of objective moral norms and the subjective conditions that dispose a person toward homosexuality. The outcome of this is quite traditional: we accept both objective moral norms and the subjective conditions that dispose some persons toward homosexual behavior. We hate the sin and love the sinner. We champion the norm but do not attempt to judge the hearts of those who violate the norm. Only God has a God's-eye view into human hearts.

Finally, I suggest that at its best postmodern philosophy represents the cleansing and redemption of Enlightenment philosophy. Blanket condemnations of postmodernism are neither logically secure nor appropriate.

Leon McKenzie
School of Education
Indiana University
Indianapolis, IN

Misreadings?

Quentin L. Quade's review of David Walsh's *After Ideology* ("Beyond Modernity," August/September) devotes most of its space to exposing three "fundamental confusions."

These criticisms are largely misconceived.

First, Prof. Quade argues that Walsh's "drive to symmetry" leads him to force his "four exemplars" (Camus, Dostoevsky, Solzhenitsyn, and Voegelin) into becoming "more alike than they in fact are." This is to misconstrue Walsh's project as some kind of literary or biographical history. What Walsh has actually done is to select four men who have lived through and written about the collapse of ideology in their own lives. These "cathartic thinkers" have "found within modernity itself . . . the possibility of transcending it . . . without derailing into the self-contracting resolve to dominate" reality, as Nietzsche tragically did. Drawing on their own records, Walsh has constructed a model for our postmodern struggle. Like any such model, it is based on but not limited by the data that suggested it. These data can subsequently be "corrected" in the light of the model. In other words, each exemplar provides data by which any other can be "adjusted."

Prof. Quade offers as the "most striking example of Walsh's drive to symmetry" the presentation of Camus as "pre-Christian." But what Walsh means is simply that Camus "has brought the problem (moral judgment in a secular world) to a clear state of development." Since "there is nothing of the Nietzschean or Marxian perseverance in self-deception," Walsh concludes that Camus is "poised for the opening toward grace," on the basis of what he has learned about "openness to being" from the collective experience of his exemplars. This is an inference, not a claim to "know how Camus would unfold." As the quotation shows, Walsh's model has a very important and very orthodox role for grace in the actual response

to the crisis of modernity by Camus or any one of us.

Secondly, Prof. Quade objects to "Walsh's tendency to elevate struggle over perception," and gives as "a prime example" a paragraph dealing with Jacques Maritain. This example does not show that Walsh characterizes the simple believer as "limited by an assumed faith, in contrast to the book's four heroes who attain reality only through struggle." A case can easily be made that belief arising or perfected in struggle is "higher" in some sense, e.g., the case of C. S. Lewis, who moved far beyond the bluff dogmatic prose of *Mere Christianity*, a book Prof. Quade cites as an unquestionable touchstone of orthodoxy.

But Walsh is making a different point. The men Walsh has chosen to study are uniquely relevant to our time and need. It is precisely because their faith is a cathartic product of our age that they can be appropriated as guides. *Pace* the "Peasant of Garonne," "it is not enough to assert Christian principles as right; their rightness must be grasped as a participation in the highest living reality." Only by revealing the actual experiential basis of secular ideology (which Voegelin diagnosed as the Gnostic "hatred of God") can its really existing power over us moderns be grasped and overcome. Only through that struggle can the divine reality become a real alternative in our lives, able to overcome the fatal attractions of ideology.

In this light, we can see that Prof. Quade's third objection, demanding to know "exactly what kind of conversion is involved" in restoring political order, is deliciously ironic. Clearly Prof. Quade thinks the world just hasn't read enough handbooks of Thomistic metaphysics.

James J. O'Meara
Long Island City, NY

Democratic Waves

Democracy is still very much a minority phenomenon among the nations of the world, but it is hard to deny that there appears to be something like a democratic revolution afoot. According to Samuel Huntington of Harvard University (writing in *The National Interest*), there have been three discernible “waves” of democracy in world history. The first lasted from the 1820s to the 1920s and was chiefly a European and North American phenomenon stemming from the American and French Revolutions. In the 1920s and 1930s, there was an antidemocratic reaction, led by Mussolini’s Italy and Hitler’s Germany.

Following World War II, and under the auspices of the victorious Allies, there was a second democratic wave. West Germany, Italy, Austria, Japan, South Korea, and some Latin American countries established what seemed to be relatively secure democracies. While there was again a reaction against democracy in some places during the 1950s, it was not lasting. Now, says Huntington, we are witnessing the third great democratic wave. It began with Portugal in 1974, and was followed by Spain, the Philippines, and, most dramatically, by the Revolution of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe.

The remarkable thing about the third wave is that it is happening in predominantly Catholic cultures. Huntington notes that for a long time students of democracy accepted as a rule of thumb that there is a necessary connection between democracy and Protestant Christianity. The democratization of Japan after World War II, for example, was at the instance of a predominantly Protestant United States. Max Weber’s classic arguments about the connections between Protestantism and capitalism were extended to theories that posited a complicated interdependence between the triumvirate of capitalism, democracy, and Protestantism. That the third democratic wave should be so Catholic, Huntington suggests, is a genuinely new thing under the sun. “In country after country,” he writes, “the choice between democracy and authoritarianism became personified in the conflict between the cardinal and the dictator. Catholicism was second only to economic development as a pervasive force for democratization in the 1970s and 1980s. The logo

of the first fifteen years of the third wave could well have been a crucifix superimposed on a dollar sign.” The generalization rings true, although we would add that evangelical Protestantism, especially in Latin America, is playing an increasingly important part in both economic development and political democracy.

The first democratic impulse in the world came from the Puritan revolution in the seventeenth century. It is undeniably impressive that three hundred years later that impulse is renewed and magnified by Catholicism. That impulse is articulated with repeated authoritative statements of great theological and moral sophistication, the most recent instance being John Paul II’s encyclical (*Centesimus Annus*) on the free society. The Catholic Church today, it is being more widely acknowledged, is the strongest and most effective institutional voice in the world for democratic governance and human rights. It seems that nobody would have predicted that even twenty-five years ago.

Now the question arises as to whether there is a necessary connection between democracy and Christianity, whether in its Protestant or Catholic forms. It may be that the expansion of democracy depends upon the expansion of the Christian missionary enterprise around the world. Huntington is skeptical of that happening. He notes the perduring power of Confucianism and Islam among billions of people. Neither of those religions has demonstrated any sympathy for the principles of democracy. Indeed, their constituting ideas and habits would seem to be profoundly antidemocratic. Huntington’s conclusion is a perhaps vain hope that what happened with Catholicism could also happen, in time, with Confucianism and Islam.

As they develop economically, non-Western societies are more likely to see virtues in political democracy than in Western Christianity and they will become more likely to reinterpret their religious and cultural traditions so as to make them compatible with the democratic political practices. Catholicism made this adjustment. If the third wave is to lead to global democracy,

comparable changes will have to occur in Confucianism and Islam.

Huntington may be right about the possibilities of long-term adjustments to democratic thought and practice in cultures dominated by Islam and Confucianism. A strong measure of skepticism is in order, however. Certainly the analogy with the change in Catholicism would seem to be misplaced. Catholicism in its antidemocratic mode was a Counter-Reformation affair. The Reformation, which was undoubtedly connected with the emergence of democracy, was, after all, directed against the Catholic Church. The more militantly secular Enlightenment that found political expression in the French Revolution was explicitly anti-Christian, and viciously anti-Catholic. In other words, for more than four centuries the Catholic Church was in a reactive posture to democracy and the ideas associated with it.

The ideas that gave birth to democracy are utterly alien to Islam and Confucianism. Perhaps, as Huntington says, they can make an "adjustment" to those ideas. For the Catholicism of the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, however, no adjustment to alien ideas was required. It was only necessary for the Catholic Church to abandon its reactive posture and retrieve elements of the larger Christian tradition that had been suppressed during the Counter-Reformation. The key element, absolutely essential to the democratic project, is that of a higher sovereignty that cannot be equated with and therefore must necessarily limit the sovereignty of the state.

From the apostles' assertion, "We must obey God rather than man" (Acts 5), through Augustine's construal of the City of God and City of Man, through the Investiture Controversy of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Christianity had traditionally insisted upon that divided sovereignty which first found democratic political expression in seventeenth-century England. Counter-Reformation Catholicism generally viewed democracy as an achievement of "the enemy"—whether Protestant or secularist. One of the more important consequences of the Christian ecumenism that was given such a powerful lift by Vatican Council II has been Catholicism's recognition of the democratic impulse as an authentically Christian impulse. One of the more striking arguments in *Centesimus Annus* is the Pope's contention that democratic governance can only be securely grounded in moral and religious, rather than thoroughly secular, truth claims. (Whether such arguments will begin to find a more favorable reception among Eastern Orthodox Christians—notably in Eastern Europe—is another great question that may be answered in the decades ahead.)

In sum, the antidemocratic period of Catholicism must be viewed as an aberration, although, to be sure, an aberration that lasted for some centuries. Catholicism has now retrieved, internalized, and

brought to effective expression those truths of the Christian tradition that gave birth to political democracy under Protestant auspices. Indeed, as forty years ago Father John Courtney Murray speculated might happen, Catholicism may now be the chief moral legitimator of a democratic project to which a large part of Protestantism—especially in its liberal American form—often seems indifferent. To the extent that is the case, it is among the more notable ironies of history.

The undemocratic or antidemocratic posture of Confucianism and Islam, on the other hand, is no aberration. Islam's devotion to a monistic and theocratic social order, as well as Confucianism's understanding of a Mandate of Heaven that equates power with morality, leave no room for the idea of sovereignties in tension or conflict. In both traditions, the notion of individual rights against the established order, of checks and balances between competing interests, of the moral legitimacy of an opposition seeking to rule—all these essential elements of democracy are not only alien but blasphemous. The decades ahead will no doubt provide additional evidence as to whether or not these two world religions can find conceptual resources and popular support for an adjustment to democracy. As things stand, however, it would appear that the future of democracy is linked to the future of Western Christianity and, in its third wave, to Catholicism in particular.

Opinion

Is Egalitarianism Good for the Jews?

Aaron Wildavsky

A pall hangs over the American debate about equality. It is becoming difficult for people to speak their minds. College campuses, of all places, are filled with silences, and the discussions that do occur are often awkward and truncated. Racial minorities and women fear being told they are unworthy; white males fear being dismissed as racist, sexist, or—if they are straight—homophobic.

My concern here is not with that larger issue, but with a more limited (but at least equally controversial) subset of it: Is the egalitarian ideal—one person should count as one and no more than one—good for Jewish political influence?

Polls and election results reveal that Jews are overwhelmingly on the left politically and thus leaders in the fight for equality. Jews constitute a substantial part of the leadership of left-liberal organizations devoted to the reduction of power differentials between rich and poor, black and white, men and women, gay and straight. Is it possible, I ask, in seeking to bring this hitherto subterranean question up for discussion, that this extraordinary political effort is likely to have the effect, whether intended or not, of diminishing Jewish political influence?

Jews have many interests, of course, that stand apart from their Jewishness. That is not in question here. Rather, by "Jewish political influence," I mean the ability of Jews both to defend the specifically Jewish interests they now have—such as support for Israel—and to maintain the politically relevant resources they would need to defend other such interests in the future. It could be argued that Jews no longer have interests that would (or should) set them apart from other Americans. But Jewish history, I think, suggests that such optimism is unwarranted, even in America. The vast majority of Jews believe there are and will continue to be issues of special importance to Jews. Jews also undoubtedly feel more secure knowing they have a reservoir of influence to draw upon should the need arise. This being so, it is worthwhile assessing the resources that have led to political influence for American Jews and asking how these would fare under current egalitarian proposals.

Compared to the general population with whom they both ally themselves and compete for power, Jews may briefly be described as tiny in proportion to the whole, concentrated in big industrial states with large numbers of electoral votes, highly educated, richer than average, far more willing to use money for political purposes, well-organized as a community, and, comparatively speaking again, immensely participatory.

Jews make up roughly 2.5 percent of the total population of the United States. Only two states—New Jersey and New York—are more than 5 percent Jewish, with New York highest at about 10 percent. The Jewish share of the population has been dropping for a long time—it stood as high as an estimated 3.6 percent in 1930. Given current trends, to the extent that Jewish influence depends on population, it can be described as very low and declining.

But population figures, of course, do not tell the whole story of political or cultural influence. A major offsetting factor for Jews has been their very high level of formal education, which has led to statistical overrepresentation in leadership roles in the arts, professions, mass media, and elsewhere. In some of these key areas—most notably, perhaps, the professoriate—Jewish influence may be expected to diminish as egalitarian schemes in the form of affirmative action programs proliferate. (Jewish *male* influence, at least; Jewish women will presumably benefit.)

Jews have also exercised influence beyond what their numbers alone would suggest in various aspects of political life. That influence too threatens to diminish in the wake of a number of egalitarian measures instituted in recent years. The story here begins with developments in the Democratic Party—the overwhelming majority of politically active Jews being Democrats rather than Republicans.

Following the disastrously divisive presidential nominating struggle in 1968, the Democrats accepted the McGovern Commission reforms requiring that specific proportions of delegates to the national convention be women, youth, and people of color. One result was a dramatic drop in the proportion of Jewish male delegates.

The same set of reforms also led to such a proliferation of primaries that they have become the main, indeed the overwhelming, mechanism for selecting presidential candidates. The justification for such heavy reliance on primaries is again egalitarian, the assumption being that "one person, one vote" is the only legitimate principle for nomination as well as election to public office.

Further, the Democratic party now has rules providing a form of proportional representation in primaries; candidates who receive above a certain minimum of the vote receive a proportional share of the delegates to which a state or district within a state is entitled. The point for Jews is in the consequences of the principle: proportional representation dilutes the value of population groups disproportionately represented in populous competitive states. Why campaign in or pay particular attention to the interests of voters in states like California, New York, and Illinois—where Jews have disproportionate influence—when under proportional representation the gain or loss in delegates is likely to be minuscule?

Again, the point for Jews is clear: Jewish voters are small in number, and any scheme that counts one as one and no more means that Jewish influence will be limited to the 2.5 percent of the population they represent.

Nor does the story end here. In 1988, the primary system for presidential nomination was extended to a regional primary called "Super Tuesday." The logic behind the regional primary has already produced a call (based once more on equality) for a national primary. Why should voters in one region, or several regions, exercise disproportionate influence? Why not combine simplicity with fairness by holding a national primary?

And why should the principle involved be restricted to primaries? What about general elections? What about the inequalitarian electoral college? Surely, among people who will accept no principle other than one person, one vote, the electoral college can only be seen as an unfortunate anomaly. Only direct election of the President can satisfy the criterion of one person,

one vote.

And, once again, that would be bad for Jewish political influence. Not for Jews alone, of course: direct election of the President would also be bad for blacks and other strategically placed minorities. But direct election would not be as bad for blacks because they are much larger (11.7 percent compared to 2.5 percent) and, therefore, more worth appealing to if numbers are all that matter. Blacks also have a much higher birth rate than Jews.

The egalitarian principle in politics extends beyond voting to finances. Proponents of campaign finance reform insist that unequal access to financial resources constitutes unfairness. Existing and proposed reforms call variously for mandated floors and ceilings in campaign spending, the principle in all cases being to reduce the influence of private interests in politics and to make election contests more equal. (Opponents of restrictions on spending point out that, given the enormous natural advantages held by incumbents, a limit on spending might well constitute an incumbents' protection act.)

Because Jews have higher incomes than average and contribute more of what they have to political purposes, Jewish influence would decline were campaign finance reforms put into effect. True, Jews could still contribute their labor to candidates, but those who could not or prefer not to spend surplus time on politics would witness a significant decline in influence.

Radical egalitarians insist that equalizing spending on elections is only a first, and rather minor, step toward what should be the true end of the campaign for equality: equalization—or as close to it as practicable—in the distribution of income. And here again, naturally, Jews would be comparative losers. If Jewish income were reduced, support for Jewish community concerns—education, Israel, politics—would necessarily decline.

The pattern of all this is unmistakably clear. Making up for small numbers through education, knowledge, income, effort, location, and unity has been the secret of Jewish political success. Jews are not the all-powerful group that conspiracy-minded zealots imagine, but they have wielded influence beyond their numbers. And the egalitarian impulse currently at work in various segments of society would have the effect of limiting that influence.

To which one response might be, So what? After all, it could be said, Jewish influence should not be seen, or maintained, as a good in itself. At least a measure of it might be sacrificed for the general good. Being Jewish involves more than religious or ethnic identification. Being Jewish is not simply about means to any end that Jews might decide to embrace, but about the choice of ends themselves. The Jewish ethical tradition, it could be argued, has from scriptural to modern times emphasized support for the weaker

elements in society: it has, that is to say, been egalitarian. For not a few Jews, the very meaning of Jewishness involves a striving for egalitarian justice. To be a Jew is to be, in that sense, a person of the left, a seeker after equality of condition.

There is no reason, to be sure, for Jews to view every issue as necessarily imbued with Jewish interests. Or to see the question of Jewish influence as an all-or-nothing affair. Caught between a desire to maintain Jewish influence and egalitarian impulses, Jews might well seek some of each. In most if not all of the areas surveyed here, there is middle ground to be found between pure egalitarianism and maximization of Jewish influence.

The larger philosophical question involves the definition of justice. The desirability or not of maintaining existing Jewish political and cultural influence comes down to differences of political vision. If social justice requires relatively equal possession of resources, then Jews ought to welcome a diminution of their current influence in order to achieve a more egalitarian society. But if one's vision of equality focuses not on equality of results but on an equality of opportunity that might well produce unequal results—and that is, of course, the more venerable and established idea of equality in America—then disproportionate Jewish influence loses its *prima facie* problematic character.

In recent years, Jews have been decertified as a "deprived minority." No doubt this judgment reflects the view that in terms of command over resources, including political influence, Jews have become established. But is it true now, and will it remain true, that Jews, who constitute so tiny a proportion of the American people, will no longer need or want influence beyond their numbers? And should we at least want to consider the possibility that what is good for the Jews might also be good for society as a whole?

I do not argue that Jewish influence must be maintained as a good in itself. I am saying that it ought not to be taken for granted or heedlessly given away without understanding the costs that its sacrifice might involve now and in the future.

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Infernal Counsel

Thomas C. Kohler

Dear Cachexia,
Well, isn't this impressive! You've had charge of this patient of yours for just two weeks and you've already managed to let him slip into taking part in

a prolife demonstration at a Planned Parenthood “clinic.” How do you do it? Keep this up, and you’ll soon discover just why it is that Wormword (whom you never met) is referred to as “Chewy” by the older hands around here.

Now, don’t fret and stain your knickers. The situation is far from lost. There are plenty of tricks to learn for successfully handling these two-legged, talking beasts. Just follow my advice, my boy, and you’ll soon be able to play this sap-brained patient of yours like a well-hooked trout.

The first thing to be kept in mind is this: It’s the little things that count. Part of the Enemy’s absolutely unnatural (and positively disgusting) love for these vile humans lies in his having created them “in His own image.” What this means is that He doesn’t make them do anything. Instead, the Enemy has left them free to decide what to make of themselves. What they are is the sum of what they have done. Consequently, every decision the gifted beasts make gives you an opening. You must capitalize on these.

Don’t indulge in hopes for the spectacular. That’s where you neophytes make your mistakes. Concentrate on the mundane. Our patients are creatures of habit. Not one of them simply leaps into the arms of His Excrescence, Big Daddy Red, at the conclusion of some thoroughly edifying but completely unexpected act of stupendous wickedness. These things require careful conditioning. Just keep the patient slouching towards us by helping him to make the seemingly small compromises, and to accept in himself the apparently small lapses, and you will soon have him safely in hand.

Now, it’s just this matter of conditioning that makes the situation with your patient so easily remediable. The chump is just not ready to have this one incident mean much. Managed properly, you not only can contain the damage but turn your patient’s little outing to your distinct advantage.

Don’t forget: As far as this prolife demonstration goes, your patient is only along for the ride. He’s there only because he feared offending his friend if he declined the invitation to go along. (We’ll attend to this unfortunate friendship later.) Like so many people, your patient finds the whole question of abortion rather unsettling. Thus, the twit does what he can to avoid thinking about the matter altogether. This no doubt has something to do with various of his dubious (but from our perspective, highly useful) adventures with the opposite sex, the mere thought of which produces a roaring sensation in his ears and a pronounced tendency to cringe when the telephone rings unexpectedly or an unseen child on the street yells “Daddy.”

Moreover, your patient is positively addicted to notions like privacy. He has the nagging sense that something is “wrong” with abortion. But, on the other hand, he fears “imposing his values on others”

(although, if pushed, he’d have a tough time telling anyone exactly what his “values” really are). So, your patient contents himself with being “personally opposed” to abortion—just as he is to loud ties or Nehru jackets. Remind me sometime to tell you about some of my favorite patients—now safely in the tender maw of Our Father Below—who were personally opposed to the Holocaust, to slavery, and to other of our magnificent achievements.

This mix of confusion and guilt that your patient feels is salubrious. Just keep sloshing it slowly back and forth. This will produce a splendid greensick feeling in the pit of his stomach at the very mention of words like conscience or morals. Then, whenever one of those nasty little questions about conduct or beliefs floats into his mind, simply ask him how he “feels” about it and whether he’s “really comfortable dealing with it.” Don’t worry: He’ll be about as comfortable as a claustrophobic on the A-train at rush hour, and every bit as eager to head for the exits. But don’t overdo it. Push the fun too far, and he may start raising questions for himself. That could be disastrous. Reason is one of the most dangerous of the Enemy’s gifts to these little beasts. What’s more, it’s habit forming.

The whole idea is to keep him from inquiring into anything seriously. (He’ll congratulate himself on being a tough-minded realist who doesn’t waste time on impractical junk.) Just keep everything fuzzy. The effect you’re after is the same one that our Special Forces Units have successfully produced in so many of the modern clergy: The lights are on, but the folks are away on a long vacation.

Now, as we speak, your patient is standing on the curb outside the “clinic” reciting the rosary in a desirably self-conscious manner. Get cracking and proceed as follows:

1. Keep his attention focused on himself (a basic element to any successful undertaking). Don’t let him think about what actually goes on inside the “clinic.” Your patient is a young man on the rise. Ask him whether “this type of stuff” is likely to further his career or his reputation with “those who count.”

2. Help him to conjure up images of himself prominently displayed on the “film at eleven.” (Of course, no news crew is going to show up. But he doesn’t know that, and the very thought that one might will heighten his experience of the theater in which he is the main actor and the sole spectator.) Let him imagine how he will explain being at the demonstration to his colleagues. (“Oh, you know, it was sort of a sociological experiment, to get a sense of the behavior of members of a fanatic sub-cult. I’m thinking of doing a study on them.”) Listen for the telltale belch of a nervous stomach. Remember: There is a fine line between cowardice and prudence. It is one we have profitably confused. Urge our version of “prudence” upon him.

3. Ask him whether he's doing any good. Point out that people continue to enter the "clinic" for "health services." It won't occur to him, as it did to that detestable Chesterton, that no one knows how many miracles have been wrought by prayer. It also won't occur to this self-infatuated cheese-brain that the very presence of witnesses to evil gets others to thinking.

4. By this time, your patient will be nearly blind with self-created anxiety. Assist him by heightening his sense of isolation. The fact that he stands in a "cloud of witnesses," as that execrable Paul pointed out, will be lost on your patient. In fact, he will hardly notice that he's in the presence of other demonstrators. Remind him that he "has lots to do today," and that he's "done his bit." Stand back so that he doesn't trample you on the way to his car.

As he drives away, the demonstration happily slipping from sight in his rearview mirror, your patient will have two contradictory thoughts (not that he'll notice that they are). First, he'll feel wildly relieved that he got away with no one important noticing that he'd been present. Secondly, he'll feel that he's done something akin to the acts of the martyrs and that he's just about as virtuous as they. He'll never take part in any other demonstration. And the very thought of taking a truly unpopular stand against the orthodoxies of the day will make him ready to blow lunch all over his shoes.

Salvation on the cheap. It's the name of the game. Now get in there, boy, and (ahem) give him hell.

Your affectionate uncle,
Fistula

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Ideology Therapy

Ben F. Meyer

Wise is he to whom all things taste as they are.
—Joseph Pieper

The first time the popular use of "pragmatic" registered on me was during the campaign of 1960. *Time* explained that religion was not a real danger with either Kennedy or Nixon, since both were "pragmatic." It was a new hurrah-word that has had a nonstop career ever since. No need to fear that with a Republican victory the far right would come to power, because Nixon, then Ford, then Reagan and Bush, deep down, were "pragmatic." (In Reagan's time, the reassurance quavered a couple of times.)

Upbeat analysts loved the word. Upset about Islamic

fundamentalism and the Ayatollah? Relax, they've got a "pragmatic" side. In the July-August 1990 issue of *Encounter* Lewis Feuer reminds readers that in the summer of 1984 the comforting word on the new Socialist government in France was its conversion to a more pragmatic stance. Iranian moderates, too, wanted to behave more pragmatically,

while spokesmen for Japan's school system asserted that "most Japanese consider themselves pragmatists [and] pragmatically speaking, [had] produced the educated, well-disciplined work force" that helped make possible the country's economic surge.

The years since then have been repeatedly marked by "pragmatism," for the press, too, has its positive thinkers. Every public figure we know little about—Soviet, Vietnamese, Chinese, Indian, Arab (notably Saddam Hussein)—has been proposed, till proven otherwise (which has happened with dismal regularity), as a closet pragmatist. Among the steps and strategies that the newspapers have found to be pragmatic: Jacques Chirac's apology to Maggie Thatcher over the use of an expletive; Gorbys's 1990 swing to the right; the advice of the President's economists in view of the recession. Every move of the Chinese government from the opening of China down to (but excluding) the crackdown at Tiananmen Square was all but electric with pragmatism.

"Pragmatic" means not-really-and-truly-hooked-on-ideology. It is typically applied to persons, movements, and policies that we have some grounds for suspecting to be really and truly hooked on ideology. Feuer made the effort to connect the newspaper use of "pragmatic" with Charles S. Peirce's philosophy of pragmatism, but the connection seems fanciful. What the newspaper use of the word shows is that if there is anything that recurrently gives ordinary people the willies, it is ideology.

Why not? It is no coincidence that ours has been the most violent and the most ideological century in history. Ideology—not just in the neutral sense of ideas that ground systematic thought and action, but in the negative sense of ideas that rationalize some alienation—carries the curse of extremism and thwarts the appeal to what might make for a soberly peaceful resolution of conflict. The war that ideology brought us in 1939 left a record fifty million dead. We don't know how many lost their lives to Leninist ideology in the Soviet Union and China, but a minimum of another fifty million is a reasonable estimate. Less murderous ideologies are vibrantly alive and well, sometimes with an A-OK rating from your local university as politically correct.

Still, for most of us, ideology is bad news. To its supporters it may make alienation sound progressive and fanaticism brave, but it is what most want less

of. So, we whistle in the dark about “pragmatism.”

But pragmatism—respect for the practicalities—is not enough to unmask ideology, much less to relieve the alienations that ideology rationalizes. For that we need more. Not more fire power or smarter bombs, but something subtler: more potent human resources, including philosophical resources.

Time was when philosophy was just a matter of thought. It still is, of course, but we have learned that it is also a matter of fact, including the facts about thought, decision, and action. Once we are in touch with radically unrevisable fact on how human beings function and cannot but function, we find ourselves in possession of a touchstone for the testing of thought.

To start with an observation: we are not equally open to all ideas. The human mind is not like some public plaza where all may come and go as they please. On the contrary, it is a unity, it has an exigence for unity, and it imposes unity on its contents. As Bernard Lonergan observed, every grasp of data involves a certain selection, every selection effects an initial structuring, and every structuring anticipates future judgments.

So the mind operates within some distinct horizon and field of vision. Moreover, the issue of the proper framing and right choice of horizon is finally settled on the basis of coherence or non-coherence with cognitional fact. Basic stances in accord with fact are “positions”; basic stances in discord with fact are “counterpositions.” A counterposition is a compass error, slight at the outset but rapidly magnified.

When human subjects function attentively, intelligently, reasonably, and responsibly, they are drawing on a naturally structured set of norms, “basic method.” Philosophy in its essential and foundational form is, first, an explicit retrieval of this method. Second, it is a satisfactory account of objectivity—i.e., of how it is that attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible functioning is precisely what puts us effectively in touch with reality. And third, philosophy is an account of reality.

These three inquiries (What exactly do we do when we grasp things intelligently, affirm them reasonably, and make our choices responsibly? How is it that this puts us in touch with the real order of things? And how should we understand this real order of things?) are radically interrelated. Differences among accounts of reality can be reduced to differences about objectivity and about the description of basic method. Differences about objectivity can be reduced to different descriptions of method; differences among those descriptions can be resolved by bringing to light the contradiction between spontaneous practice and mistaken theory.

Such is our basic philosophic resource for spotting ideology, discrediting it, and offering a better alternative.

Among current ideologies there is one invented in

Germany (Heidegger), repackaged in France (Derrida), and marketed in the U.S. (Yale, Duke, etc.) named deconstruction. Texts have no objective content or merit (take that, Shakespeare!) and values are products of power.

The possibility of treating any text as open to meaning other than that intended by the writer is given in the nature of language. Language is a way of communicating by the use of vocal sounds conventionally associated with meanings. The sounds are few, and the meanings many; the convention that binds the meanings to the sounds is a matter of usage, and the specification among usages is a matter of verbally realized intention. There is plenty of room for diversity in construing any word-sequence. Some few “readings” will accurately reflect the intended sense of speaker or writer. Most will not. It was left to Derrida and his troops to cultivate indifference to accurate construal—not just now and then, in order to amuse, or to make a point, but systematically, in order to . . . well, to do what? Oh, lots of things—all of them lyrically dancing in the sunlight, out from under the shadow of having to function reasonably and responsibly.

The alienation that is being rationalized is grandiose. It is disengagement from aspects of the human vocation (to live with others and respond to them, taking account of their being and hoping, joining them in inheriting a past and shaping a future). And in rejecting aspects of the human vocation, there is no need to be consistent. Oh, the pleasures of caprice—or, better yet, of creativity.

It is the creativity of making up and playing a new game. This might suggest that deconstruction is not very challenging. There is challenge in danger, however, and the deconstructionist (since what he has to offer responds to no lasting need) is always in danger of losing his audience, *in danger of turning into a bore*. Here is where the challenge lies: to figure out ways of being, and staying, entertaining.

Part of the entertainment is flattery. You, quick-witted reader, you and I are in on the game. I already know, and you, if you keep watching, can learn how to play it. Take a quick look at the onlookers, those puzzled outsiders, reduced to silence. And just as they start to catch on, we’ll change the rules.

As in all games, there is here a factor of fantasy, escape, relief. On the surface it is relief from the boredom and dullness bound up with the conventional daily grind. Further down, relief from being known and pigeonholed, from being weighed and found lightweight. Still further down, relief from being obliged, obliged by and to and again and still and forever . . .

The rationalization of this alienation turns on an observation about language. Language as speech-resource is a world apart. It is a closed system in that relations to non-semiotic reality are irrelevant to the system as such. Now, all we need is to abstract from

what happens to language when it is actually used, and we may attribute—not just to “language” but to actual texts—that irrelevance to referents that belongs to language as a closed system. So, if he wishes, the reader or interpreter may assume a new function: not finding, but inventing, meaning. The deconstructive game is born. From here it can go, has gone, and is still going in many directions at once.

But there is a cool observation that reveals how threadbare the deconstructionist’s rationalization is. In actual usage the intentions that the speaker/writer has managed to objectify verbally *specify both the reference and the meaning of the words*. Juliet, bewailing the ill luck that the young man she loved was “Romeo” of the enemy clan, cried: “Wherefore art thou Romeo?” That is: Why did you have to be “Romeo” rather than, say, some unrelated “Silvio” or “Georgio”? (Yes, that is what it means, *not* “Romeo, where are you hiding?”)

The first philosophical move against ideology is to debunk the rationalization. But it often happens, as here, that whereas the rationalization is shallow, the

alienation it rationalizes is deep. Does philosophy have anything to offer vis-à-vis the alienation?

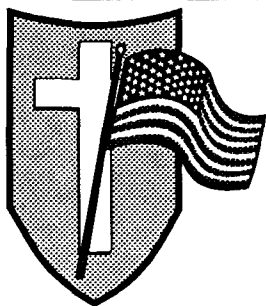
Yes and no. Alienation is a state of soul. To the extent that truth itself is therapeutic (and it is), philosophy heals the soul. How deeply it heals depends on the state of one’s taste for truth, that pure desire that we can never altogether expunge.

Taste is the word. The modern malady has been to taste oneself in everything. “God’s most deep decree,” said Hopkins,

Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me.

A more potent therapy goes beyond philosophy. Grace alters taste. It comes on any wind, a blinding light on the road to Damascus, a boy’s singsong “Tolle, lege” wafting over the wall into Augustine’s garden.

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Encounter or Conflict?

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Man and Woman: An Old Story

Leon R. Kass

Man and woman. What are they, and why—each alone and both together? How are they alike and how different? How much is difference due to nature, how much to culture? What difference does—and should—the difference make? What do men want of women or women of men? What should they want? Do they really need each other? If so, why? Which beliefs, customs, and institutions governing sexuality best promote their human flourishing?

These very basic questions are, nowadays, rarely asked, yet their subject is passionately and widely debated. Indeed, no important matter of human life generates today as much talk and controversy. Regrettably, much of our discussion of man and woman is not especially illuminating, because, being political and disputatious, it seeks victory rather than understanding. Traditional notions, held to be *merely* traditional, are in retreat, ironically, especially in religious institutions. In the academy, humanists are going wild over gender: legions of scholars are making their careers exposing the sexist bias of all European literature, philosophy, and theology, preaching the “cultural construction” of gender, or advancing the (anti-intellectual and self-undermining) doctrine that everyone’s thinking is decisively determined by accidents of birth—not only gender, but also race and class. Politically correct thinking throughout our society denounces patriarchy, neuters pronouns and other allegedly sexist speech, integrates locker rooms, sends mothers of infants to fight in Kuwait, and prosecutes vigorously yet almost always one-sidedly the war between—or is it now against?—the sexes.

On the venerable subject of man and woman, there

are today—as there have always been—deep differences of opinion. Yet serious or thoughtful public examination of these opinions has become virtually impossible. Despite our constitutional protection of freedom of speech and despite our vaunted openness, we do not now enjoy a climate of opinion that encourages us to improve our opinions, or to replace them with knowledge or truth—partly because we have become too sophisticated to believe that there are any truths about this subject, separate, of course, from the ones which those in power allegedly “construct.”

I am deeply saddened by this state of affairs, and I reject these assertions and this skepticism. For I think I know at least a few important truths about man and woman, and so do you. For one thing, every reader, whatever his or her beliefs, has a navel. Contemplate it: it offers clear proof that each of us is born of woman. Moreover, absent a miracle, each of us owes our living existence to exactly one man and one woman—no more, no less, no other—and, thus, to one act of heterosexual union. This is no social construction, it is natural fact, a fact older even than the human race. Another fact, this one nearly as old as the human race, is human self-consciousness regarding sexual difference and the difference it makes—and also the troubles it causes. Difficulties in *being* man or woman, like difficulties in *understanding* man and woman, are a very old story. Why? Because, as I will argue, of certain permanent and irreducible truths about man, woman, and sexuality as such.

To help us think about the old story of man and woman, I wish to consider a distinguished old story of man and woman, quite literally, their very first story, the story of the Garden of Eden. I do so for several reasons: First, to gain distance from current and more political controversies, the better to consider the basic questions. Second, to understand for myself how man and woman are regarded by our own religious tradition, whose prime story concerns primordial man and woman and their complex interactions. Under-

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standing this tradition through secondary sources is risky, especially today; for much of what is now said about the Bible in general and this story in particular—for example, that it is sexist, or that it justifies the subjugation of women—strikes me as either erroneous or shallow. Third, I examine this story to see whether and how it speaks truly, for I suspect that, like any great story, it is a repository of wisdom, or, better, can help us toward wisdom if we seriously think about its meaning.

Because my approach is somewhat unusual, I should make explicit *how* I intend to read this story. First, I will read it closely, literally, and straight, apart from all later commentary, Jewish or Christian, and apart from all the uses people have made of it. Second, I hope to read it without ideological commitments, especially on the subject of sex and gender. Third, I make no assumptions about who the author is or whether he was male or female; for I do not think it matters. For inasmuch as the text addresses our minds and hearts, inviting serious and sensitive reflection, it matters not who is speaking. If a thinker (or reader), whether male or female, feminist or misogynist, stumbles upon a truth about sex, it would still be truth, and the only way to know whether or not it is true is to think about it. Fourth, more generally, I believe this text can be read philosophically, i.e., in search of wisdom, without prior religious commitment; one need not be a believer either to understand what is being said, and why, or even to affirm or deny the truth of the account. In this respect, I read this book as I read any other great book: I assume that every word counts; I attend especially carefully to the sequence and the local context, in the belief that the meaning of each part is dependent partly on what comes before and after, both immediately and also remotely. As with any book, I seek to discover what it says and means and whether it speaks truly.

True, I face special difficulties reading the Bible this way, especially because one must eventually go one way or the other about the role of God—just as one must do, by the way, also regarding the role of Zeus and Apollo in the *Iliad*. True, especially after God begins to instruct Abraham in His chosen way, one cannot confirm or affirm on simply philosophical grounds the fact or the content of His special revelations. But, at least through the first eleven chapters of Genesis, I believe that one can learn much of what these stories teach by regarding God as nothing more (but also nothing less) than the *ontological ground and support* for what is happening narratively. Not God as overwhelming and arbitrary power or as freely willing agent of intervention, but God as the source in being and/or goodness that “stands behind” or supports or clarifies the meaning of what comes to be and is. God in these stories speaks for being itself; His words and deeds help us to find and, even more, to rely on the reasonableness and soundness of what

we learn from the stories.

The early chapters of Genesis (after the first one) present an account of human beginnings largely in temporal sequence, seemingly as an unfolding account of early human history. But—and this is probably the most important principle of my “method” of reading—I am convinced that the temporal account is also and more importantly a vehicle for conveying something *atemporal* and *permanent* about human life in the world. The narrative teaches about human beginnings in two other senses: first, it presents a universal anthropology (and even an ontology), showing the elements—the psychic and social beginnings—of human life as human, possibly true for all times and places. The first man and the first woman, and their descendants, are *prototypically*—and not just ancestrally—human. Second, because the anthropological account has a moral-political intention, the stories introduce us to human life in all its moral ambiguity; we are meant to learn which human elements cause what sorts of moral or political trouble and why. In this sense, the early chapters of Genesis begin the moral education of the reader.

The story of the Garden of Eden is, of course, not just about man and woman; on the contrary, their tale is overarched by a much larger theme: man’s disobedience, the loss of innocence and the emergence of human freedom and moral self-consciousness, the loss of Eden and our entrance upon a burdened and painful mortal existence. Much of what I do here abstracts from these very important considerations. Yet I believe I include enough of the context to show why those massive themes are in fact intimately tied to the story of sex.

I

As our story opens, the earth is hard, dry, and lacking in vegetation;* we learn from the start how the

* Compare this with the watery and amorphous beginning of the so-called first creation story. Other important differences indicate that the second story is not simply a magnified and more detailed account of the creation of man already reported in Genesis 1. For example, the first story ends with man, the second begins with him. In the first, the animals come first and man is to be their ruler; in the second, the beasts come after, as possible companions. In the first, male and female are created together; in the second, sequentially, male first (see below). In the first, things are said to be “good”; in the second, there is a tree of knowledge of good and *bad*, and man’s aloneness is said to be “not good.” In the first, man is created straightaway in God’s likeness; in the second, man *acquires* God-like qualities only at the end, and only in transgressing. (3:22) In the first, man is given a positive injunction, for fecundity and dominion; in the second, in need of restraint, he is given a negative commandment. The first story offers a cosmic vision and addresses us as spectators, majestically presenting our place in a cosmic whole; the second story maintains a strictly terrestrial focus

earth needs both the rain of heaven and the workings of man. Even before we meet him, man is defined by his work, man has his work cut out for him: less the ruler over life, more the servant of the earth, man will till and toil, needily waiting for rain, anxious about the future. The story begins convincingly, conveying a nearly universal truth about human life. But *why* is this our life? What is responsible for its being so difficult? The sequel intends an answer.

A beginning clue may be contained in man's dual origins: he is constituted by two principles, one low ("dust of the earth"), one high ("breath of life"). The human being first comes to sight as a formed and animated (or breathing) dust of the ground. Higher than the earth, yet still bound to it, the human being has a name, *adam* (from *adamah*, meaning "earth" or "ground"), which reminds of his lowly terrestrial origins. Man is, from the start, up from below and in between.

What is he like, this prototypical human being? He is a simple being, with a simple soul, living a simple life. Upright, naked, ignorant, speechless, and innocent, he knows no complex or specifically human passions or desires: neither shame nor pride, anger nor guilt, malice nor vanity, wonder nor awe visit his soul. Having his simple desires—for food, for drink, for repose—simply met, he is content; with little gap between desire and fulfillment, he knows no self-division or self-consciousness. He appears to be like a grown-up child, or, perhaps, a hairless orangutan; a protohuman being, he is human only or mainly in looks. Solitary, free, and independent, enjoying what Rousseau would later call "the sentiment of existence," he lives only for himself, in a world that provides him peace, ease, and the satisfaction of his basic needs.

Man probably never lived in fact alone or in an edenic garden. Regardless, the story conveys truly a permanent aspect of our being. Whatever else human beings are or become, they are, always and at bottom, *also* beings with an uncomplicated, innocent attachment to their own survival and ease, beings who experience and feel, immediately and without reflection, the goodness of their own aliveness. This stratum of *animal* being—private bodily need, privately satisfied and enjoyed—is an ineradicable part of *human* being. All men know hunger, thirst, and fatigue. No man, no matter how altruistic or saintly, meets his own hunger by putting food into someone else's mouth. Moreover, from the point of view of simple necessity—for food and drink—the world is a

rather generous place; were it not for the depredations of civilized man, it would be so still. For many of our simpler relatives, including the primates, it remains in large measure a veritable garden; and it would still be so for us, had we never risen up from animality or childishness.

Yet the simple, primordial human being because he is *primordially human*—or perhaps, instead, *potentially human*—is not quite simple. As the story subtly suggests, there is something disquieting in his original nature. Some innate capacity or potential in the human soul dangerously threatens to upset the tranquility of man's simple and innocent life. For why else would there be need for a prohibition? Two possible sources of disturbance are identified, metaphorically, by the two special trees, which are distinguished from the trees good for food. (2:9) The tree of life, offering deathlessness, stands in the center of man's garden; man's immediate attachment to life implies an (at least) instinctive fear of death, which, becoming conscious, could and does greatly disturb man's tranquility.

But, from the Bible's point of view, even more disquieting is the possibility of human freedom, symbolized by the tree of knowledge of good and bad. Any free choice—which is, by definition, an act of non-obedience—means, implicitly, reaching for and acting on our own "knowledge" (or opinion) of good and bad, better and worse. For a human being—or even a protohuman being—as for any human child, the possibility of choosing for oneself lies always within reach. And, as every parent teaches, and as we children learn painfully by ourselves much later, a free choice is not necessarily a good choice, not even for oneself. The generous God paternalistically seeks to keep man from sacrificing his simple and innocent happiness; yet the need for such a restraint shows that the autonomous source of trouble lies already deep within. Moreover, man's ability to understand the prohibition, however partially, proves that he needs it; because he already has mind enough to distinguish the trees by name, he will soon enough have a mind of his own, and with it, the ability to make himself miserable.

II

The itch in his soul that could destroy his contentment is, apparently, not yet manifest to the simple human being. Neither is a second difficulty: his aloneness. It is not man, but the Lord God who notices: "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a help opposite him (*ezer k'negdo*)."

(2:18) As this observation leads to and explains the creation of woman, we need to consider its meaning more carefully.

Why and for whom is man's aloneness not good? Is it not good for the man or not good for the world around him or not good for God? Is it not good because of present circumstances or because of likely future

and addresses us as suffering moral agents, poignantly presenting an account of how misery enters human life. The first story denies the divinity and demotes the status of the sun and the heavens; the second story shows the sad outcome of the natural human inclination to find our own way in the world exercising our reason and looking to "nature" for guidance. (See my essay, "Evolution and the Bible: Genesis I Revisited," *Commentary*, November 1988)

possibilities? That is, might God be anticipating human death—which He had just mentioned as the inevitable consequence of gaining knowledge of good and bad—against which He will now provide the means of perpetuation? Much depends on how we understand man's solitariness.

It is common and appropriate to think that "alone" means "lonely" or "in need of assistance"; that is, that the "aleness" is a badge of weakness. Weakness cries out for help, whether as companion, partner, or co-worker; and God in fact offers to make a "help" for the human being. But "alone" could also mean "self-sufficient" or "independent"; it could be a mark of apparent strength—real or imagined. Aleness as strength and apparent self-sufficiency might be dangerous in a variety of ways: a solitary being, lacking a suitable mirror, might be incapable of self-knowledge; or, because seemingly independent, the solitary man, though he dwelt in the Lord's garden, might have no real awareness of the presence of God;* or, because seemingly self-sufficient, he might be inclined to test the limits—like the hero Achilles or like the original circle-men in Aristophanes' tale (in Plato's *Symposium*) of the birth of *eros*—seeking evidence for or against his own divinity. For "aleness" as strength, the proper remedy is weakening, caused by division, opposition, conflict. Fittingly, God proposes an ambiguous helper. Man's helper is to be (in Hebrew) *neged*, i.e., *opposite* to him, *over against* him, *boldly in front of* him, *in his face*: the helper is to be (also? instead?) a *contra*. Putting together "partner" and "opposition," God proposes to make man a *counterpart*. What is called for, whatever the reason, is not just another, but an *other* other. Company here comes with difference; and *la difference* turns out to make a very big difference, both for good and ill.

III

The coming of woman inaugurates (if the account is read temporally) or embodies (if, as I prefer, the account is read ontologically or anthropologically) a new dimension of our humanity, comprising augmented powers of reason and speech, higher levels of self-awareness, and genuine sociality rooted in sexual difference and attraction—all in one package. Man's difference from the animals is decisively a matter of sexual self-awareness; this new divided consciousness (gradually) separates man from the (merely) animal way of life, represented by the solitary human being

* Those who wish to claim that man before the coming of woman lived in company and harmony with God do not take sufficiently seriously God's (Being's) own testimony that man *was alone*. Put in nontemporal terms, there is neither textual evidence nor sensible reason for thinking that a human being would have knowledge of or a relationship to the divine if he had no relations with other human beings.

considered to this point. But, as we shall see, sexuality and sexual awareness have several distinct elements (or "stages"), even now recognizable and, to a degree, separable ("recapitulated") in the emerging human sexuality surrounding puberty. The primary element is not uniquely human.

To prepare him for the appropriate counterpart, man's desire for company is stimulated by his encounter with the animals. His dormant powers of reason—which is, at bottom, the capacity to separate and combine, to see otherness and sameness—are awakened by this confrontation; the names he gives the animals may be arbitrary, but the differences ratified by the different names are not. But this is not merely a disinterested exercise in taxonomy; his powers of discernment turn back upon himself, with feeling. As a result, he gains the first germ of self-consciousness: I am not alone; but I am different from them; they are different from me, indeed, too different to satisfy my newly awakened desire for a fitting counterpart. "But for the human being there was not found a help opposite him." (2:20)

In the immediate sequel, God creates the counterpart out of man himself; He makes or builds a woman (*ishah*) out of the man's (*adam*'s) rib, and brings her unto the man. The necessary duality is produced from within. True, the surgery is less drastic than that symmetrical hemisection performed by Apollo on the original circle-men in Aristophanes' tale, each half then longing to find and unite sexually with its missing other half. But surgery it is, and the original man is no longer what he was; he is no longer whole. The original and amorphous stirrings of restlessness (freedom? loneliness? ambition? fear?) are, as we shall see, to be replaced by focused desire.

Some critics see in this account of woman's origin evidence that the text is sexist: not only is man created first and woman second, but woman's being is derivative and dependent on man. But the text even more readily supports an opposite view. For one thing, the man's origin was lower, from the dust; the woman begins from already living flesh and, moreover, from flesh taken close to the heart. Also, the man is, in the process, rendered less than whole; presumably the woman made from the rib is not in any way deformed. Besides, the difference in origin may betoken not a matter of rank or status, but a difference in the character of primordial male and female desire—a matter to which we soon come.

The charge of sexism might receive an even more radical answer. *Adam*—the prototypical human being—prior to the creation of woman was, in fact, either sexless or androgynous: the female principle was within; only after the separation is there really male and female, only then does sexuality make a difference. Never mind anatomy: the original *adam* is *functionally* gender-indifferent—in keeping with the fact that the basic stratum of embodied life and its self-preservation has nothing whatsoever to do with sex. The original

human being—and, more important, the first or lowest element of human life—is, even today, sexless and nonerotic.

But one must not ignore the gender asymmetry in the presentation. Though, in the absence of woman, he may know nothing of his maleness or its meaning, the first human being seems to have been male. And, be this as it may, it is certainly with a *sense* of his own priority and prerogative that the man reacts to the woman's appearance, as have billions of men down to the present day:

And the man said, "This, now (or, 'at last'; literally, 'the time,' *hapaam*) is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; and this shall be called woman (*ishah*) because from man (*ish*) this was taken." (2:23)

The appearance of the woman prompts the first full human sentence, indeed, the first speech of any human being directly quoted in the text. Man's counterpart stirs his soul to new powers and insights. The man sees the woman as both same and other: as she stands before and against him, he also sees *himself* for the first time. As a result, he now names himself: no longer *adam*, generic human-being-from-the-earth, but *ish*, individual male human being, man as male in relation to female woman. The woman, *ishah*, gets from the man the lexically derivative name; her name, like her origin, is derivative. Yet her place in this speech of self-discovery and self-naming is, in fact, first: only because the woman stands first before him and comes first to mind is he able to know and name himself. This deep and far-reaching insight about complementarity and selfhood is beautifully conveyed by the text: in the man's speech, *ishah*, although lexically derivative, is spoken first.

Let us look more closely at the man's first speech, regarded as an expression of first desire or, if you will, the germ of love. Though he acknowledges the woman's otherness, he is here much more impressed by her similarity; indeed, he exaggerates and treats similarity as sameness: "This is my flesh and bone; this is mine; this is me." His first expression of desire is felt as the love of one's own, more precisely, the love of one's own flesh. The first element of love is literally self-ish: the other appears lovable because it is (regarded as) same, because it is (or seems to be) oneself. This love seeks merging, *re*-union, fusion, as the narrator (interrupting) says, "Therefore a man (*ish*) leaves his father and his mother and cleaves unto his wife: *that they may become as one flesh*."* (2:24;

* This interruption of the narrative seems to me best understood as a moral gloss not on monogamy but on the love of your own, which, strictly speaking, means incest, including parent-child incest. The narrator makes clear that love of your own flesh does not—i.e., should not—lead to incest, as it does among our primate forebears.

emphasis added)

This primordial aspect of sexuality is ubiquitous and well-known. It is most famously represented in the Aristophanic tale of love as the search for one's own missing half, as the desire to close and fuse in order to restore a missing wholeness—which, tragically, cannot be restored. It is a stirring in the soul to repair or furnish a purely bodily lack. Corporeal, possessive, yet indifferent to rank or rule, unabashed because innocent and ignorant of what it truly means or wants, sexual lust drives upright human beings toward a not especially human conjunction, caricatured as "making the beast with two backs." Whatever else may supervene to moderate or transform or humanize our sexual desire, this ancestral, lustful, and possessive sexuality remains present and powerful. *All* sexuality includes such an element, one that can best be "explained" on the hypothesis that its goal (unknownst to the participants) is the restoration of some "lost" bodily wholeness, that the seemingly other is beloved because he or she is really just a missing part of oneself.

Perhaps one should not say "he *or* she." The speech of desire was the speech of the man: indeed, in announcing the "she is mine, she is me" character of his desire, he identifies himself as a male human being, against his female counterpart. What the woman thought of all this we are not told. What about her desire? Were her feelings mutual or symmetrical? We do not know; but there is some reason to doubt it. Indeed, the different origin of man and woman, and the origin of woman from man's flesh and bone, may be a literary vehicle for suggesting and communicating basic natural differences in male and female sexual desire. If males as males want possessive cleaving and fusing, what do females want? If male desire is naturally focused on woman, what is the heart's desire of woman as female?

Anyone who does not want to be self-deceived about these most important matters would certainly want to consider, without prejudice, whether male and female desire were, and are, *to begin with* (i.e., before culture takes over), symmetrical and even identical. Stepping now outside the text, but prompted by its hint of possible asymmetry, I am inclined to think that the asymmetry may be real and deep, especially if we think of sex and sexual difference in an evolutionary context. These thoughts are based on matters having more to do with reproduction than with sexual desire per se, but the implications for desire follow necessarily. For, evolutionarily speaking, sexual desire serves and is selected for reproductive success. Thus, although man—like all the other mammals—experiences lust without realizing its connection to generation of offspring, the character of his lusting would certainly be conditioned by its relation to that outcome or goal.

As sex has biological meaning in relation to repro-

duction, sexual differences would be, to begin with, differentiated according to germinal differences regarding perpetuation. For the female, the reproductive future rests on very few eggs; in human beings, chance for reproductive success rides on one egg a month. Success for the female would be enhanced by anything that would, first, guarantee fertilization, and, second, gain support of and protection for her necessarily few progeny. The male reproductive future, less concentrated, is carried by billions of sperm. Part of the most effective strategy would be multiple, frequent, and polygamous inseminations. Compared to the egg, which travels little and stays protected close to home, the sperm must travel far in hostile territory, competing with many rivals: speed, energy, and tenacity will be rewarded and perpetuated by natural selection, and not only in the sperm. These differences regarding the gametes are, no doubt, correlated with differences in body structure and function, and also, more to our point, with differences of soul. Evolutionarily speaking, in successful mammalian species the desire for copulation must necessarily be very strong in males; it must be even stronger in any species—like the human—in which the females do not go into heat and are sexually receptive throughout the estrous cycle. Female desire need not be mutual or mutually strong or aggressive; at least as far as animals are concerned, female receptivity would be sufficient.

The situation is, speaking even only biologically, much more complicated. Other sex-related psychic elements—say, those related to courtship or pregnancy or nursing—complicate the picture. The economy and balance of desire will differ among mammals, depending, for example, on whether the male and female bond monogamously for life or whether polygamy or “casual sex” are the species’ natural way. Further, other aspects of specifically human sexuality can and (as we shall soon see) do alter this animal foundation—even before cultural influences have their powerful say. Yet, once again, Genesis seems to speak truly, not only by presenting as a distinct “aspect” this basic level of sexuality—animal lust for union—but also in hinting that, at *this* level, sexual desire may be asymmetrically distributed, with perhaps differing focus, direction, and intensity among males and females. If this is true, the focus of woman’s desire remains, for now, a mystery.

Whatever might be the case about gender differences in desire, there is—now returning to our story—no difference regarding *consciousness* of desire: it is virtually absent. Desire is experienced, desire energizes, desire is satisfied—and it is, as the allegedly liberated now say, no big deal. Lust comes naturally (what could be bad?): “and they were both naked the man (*adam*) and his wife (*ishtoh*), and were not ashamed.” (2:25) This lack of shame, too, was natural, as shamelessness is with all the other animals. Sexual self-consciousness was still a thing of the future; likewise, all matters

of moral judgment. For now, just fuse and be glad.

IV

Before moving on to consider the next aspect of the unfolding account of man and woman, I pause for a brief and necessarily very partial treatment of the notorious conversation between the serpent and the woman. The force of this first conversation, begun by the Bible’s first question, is to call into question authority and obedience; by challenging the goodness (3:1) and the truthfulness (3:4) of the author, by denying the announced consequences of disobedience (3:4-5), and by suggesting attractive alternative benefits of eating (i.e., goods beyond food and sex, namely, godlikeness though knowledge [3:5]), speech and reason erode the force of the prohibition.* Once the prohibition is undermined, once reason awakens, *simple* obedience—whether to God or to fixed instinct—becomes impossible. The imagination is liberated by and in the assertion of the possibility of “Not”: things may not be what they seem—even better, things need not be as they are. With alternatives now freely before her, the woman’s desire grows on its own, partially enticed by the serpent’s promise of wisdom, mostly fueled by her newly empowered imagination:

And the woman *saw* that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat. (3:6)

The woman “sees” in a new light, and for the first time mind and desire both color and reflect the new powers of imagination, powers that mark a giant step

* This episode, which prepares the transgression, is, among other things, a mordant reflection on speech and reason; speech is shown to be a vehicle of both mischief and misunderstanding. The serpent’s first question—“Yea, hath God said: Ye shall not eat of *any* (*mikol*) tree of the garden?”—implies that God might be the sort of malicious being who arbitrarily keeps from his creatures *all* life-sustaining food. In his next speech, he calls God a liar. The woman, for her part, also says the thing which is not, albeit in innocence: she answers not the question that was asked, says more than was called for, *misidentifies* the forbidden tree as the one “in the midst of the garden,” adds “neither shall ye touch it” to the prohibition, and, most importantly, converts the predicted *consequences* of disobedience (“for in the day thou eatest thereof, dying you will die”; 2:17) into the *reason* for obedience (“Ye shall not eat of it . . . lest you die”; 3:3). When the serpent denies that death will follow eating, the woman no longer has any reason to obey—having forgotten that obedience to the command was itself the reason. Thus, we have here a prototypical “triumph” of free, calculating rationality, liberating itself from the command of necessity (or instinct or nature or Being or God).

on the road to humanization—in all its pathos and ambiguity.

We must try to ignore all latter-day commentary and its harsh negative judgment on the deed of woman—a judgment, it is true, not wholly unfounded given the overall context. Considering not morality and sin but only psychology and anthropology, we are compelled to notice that it is woman's soul that carries the germ of human ascent. Unlike the man, with his desires sexually fixated upon the woman, the woman is here more open to the world—to beauty and to the possibility of wisdom. She has more than sex on the brain. Her aspirations, however diffuse in direction, however ambiguous in result, are the first specifically *human* longings. Precisely because her *eros* is less focused and carnal, it can grow wings and fly. The man, who did (as he has so often done since) what was pleasing to woman, speechlessly followed her lead into disobedience or, to say the same thing, into humanity. (3:6)

V

The first discovery of our humanity, or, better, the discovery that *constitutes* our humanity, is a discovery about our sexual being (not, as others would say, about our mortality), a discovery made not indifferently but with passing judgment:

And the eyes of them both were opened,
and they knew that they were naked. (3:7)

The serpent had promised, “Your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.” (3:5) But, as the biblical author points out, with irony, their eyes were opened instead to the knowledge of their nakedness, which now becomes a source of shame and distress. They saw things as they really were: they noticed what had hitherto escaped notice; or, perhaps, they now understood the meaning of what had merely been seen. But irony notwithstanding, we must ponder the suggestion that the beginning of moral knowledge or the beginning of human wisdom is, in truth, an awareness of the meaning of nakedness. What is nakedness? Why is awareness of it shameful? How does this awareness and our response to it alter the relationship between man and woman?

To be naked means, of course, to be defenseless, unguarded, exposed—a sign of our vulnerability before the elements and the beasts. But the text makes us attend, as did our ancient forebears, to our sexuality. In looking, as it were, for the first time upon our bodies as sexual beings, we discover how far we are from anything divine. More concretely, we discover, first, our own permanent incompleteness. We have need for, and are dependent upon, a complementary yet different other, even to realize or satisfy our bodily nature. We learn that sex means that we are halves, not wholes, and, worse, that we do not command the missing complementary half. Worse yet, fusion is impossible: copulation gets us only

apposition, not unification. Neither are we internally whole. We are possessed by an unruly or rebellious “autonomous” sexual nature within—one that does not heed our commands (any more than we heeded God's); we face also within an ungovernable and disobedient element, which embarrasses our claim to self-command. We are made aware of powerful impulses, whose true import we don't understand, precisely because they are recognizably different from the more basic and strictly self-serving desires for food, drink, and rest, with their strictly private satisfactions. We are compelled to submit to the mastering desire within and to the wiles of its objects without; and in surrender, we lay down our pretense of upright lordliness, as we lie down with necessity. Our nascent pride, born of reflection, is embarrassed also by the *way* we need and are needed by the sexual other. Later, on further reflection, we might even discover that the genitalia are a sign of our perishability, that their activity is, willy-nilly, a vote in favor of our own demise, providing as it does for those who will replace us.

Finally, all this noticing is itself problematic. For in turning our attention to our own insufficiency, dependence, perishability, animality, self-division, and lack of self-command, we manifest a further difficulty, the difficulty of self-consciousness itself. For a peculiarly human doubleness is now present in the soul, through which we scrutinize ourselves, seeing ourselves as others see us. We are no longer assured of the spontaneous, immediate, *unself-conscious* participation in life, experienced with a whole heart and soul undivided against itself. Worse, self-consciousness is not only corrosive and obstructive; it is also judgmental. Because we are now beings with a nascent sense of pride, we cannot hide from ourselves, when we see ourselves being seen by the other, the painful awareness of our own inadequacies and weaknesses. We are ashamed.

The emergence of shame and sexual self-consciousness—mutually and equally, it should be stressed—radically transforms relations between man and woman. Sexual attraction is now suffused with a concern for approbation and a fear of rejection. Each discovers that the other is genuinely and irreducibly other, not an alienated portion of oneself. Moreover, each discovers that his or her relation to the other is not only unfree and needy, but even demanding—all reasons why one might meet with both disapprobation and refusal.

But, strangely, the discovery of unfreedom is freely made and partly liberating. If there can be refusal, there can also be acceptance. A new dimension of freedom—with momentous consequences—alters the sexual necessity. Each seeks no longer mere submission, but *willing* submission; each seeks to win the heart of the other. Each seeks approval, praise, respect, esteem—perhaps, first, as a means of securing sexual satisfaction, but soon enough as an end in itself. Through courtship and flirtation, inspiration and seduction, a new dialectic is introduced into the dance: approval, admiration, and

regard require keeping lovers apart at the beholding distance, yet the original sexual instinct drives toward fusion. A new and genuine intimacy is born out of the delicate need to preserve and negotiate this distance and its closure. And yet, the friendship of the lovers remains inherently problematic: on the one side, difference, dependence, and demand; on the other side, the wish for approbation earned and freely given. This tension, sometimes recognized, often not, energizes human *eros* and raises it to new possibilities.

The animals, too, are naked, but they know no shame. They, too, experience sexual and other necessity, but they neither know it nor know it as necessary. This knowledge, though humbling, is not disabling. On the contrary, it is the spur to rise. Human beings do not take their shame lying down: "And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves girdles." (3:7) Sexual shame becomes the mother of invention, art, and new modes of cooperative sociality: note well, it is not the woman alone who sews. Clothing, a human addition to nature, at first hides the sexual from view. An obstacle is symbolically presented to immediate gratification of lust. Moreover, clothing, both a covering over or dissimulation and also an adornment and beautification, allows the imagination to embellish and love to grow in the space provided by the restraint placed upon lust, a restraint opened by shame and ratified by covering it up. One can hardly exaggerate the importance of this moment. Kant has captured it, economically and profoundly, in his "Conjectural Beginning of Human History."

In the case of animals, sexual attraction is merely a matter of transient, mostly periodic, impulse. But man soon discovered that for him this attraction can be prolonged and even increased by means of the imagination—a power which carries on its business, to be sure, the more moderately, but at once also the more constantly and uniformly, the more its object is removed from the senses. By means of the imagination, he discovered, the surfeit was avoided which goes with the satisfaction of mere animal desire. The fig leaf (3:7), then, was a far greater manifestation of reason than that shown in the earlier stage of development. For the one [i.e., desiring the forbidden fruit] shows merely a power to choose the extent to which to serve impulse; but the other—rendering an inclination more inward and constant by removing its object from the senses—already reflects consciousness of a certain degree of mastery of reason over impulse. *Refusal* was the feat which brought about the passage from merely sensual to spiritual attractions, from mere animal desire gradually to love, and along with this from the feeling of the merely agreeable to a taste for beauty, at first only for beauty in man but at length for beauty in nature as well. In addition, there came a first hint at the development of man as a moral creature. This came from the sense of decency, which is an inclination

to inspire others to respect by proper manners, i.e., by concealing all that which might arouse low esteem. Here, incidentally, lies the real basis of all true sociability.

This may be a small beginning. But if it gives a wholly new direction to thought, such a beginning is epoch-making. It is then more important than the whole immeasurable series of expansions of culture which subsequently spring from it.

Though the seeds of civilization are, indeed, sown here, Kant's picture is too rosy. From the Bible's point of view, the human response to sexual awareness, while perfectly intelligible and humanizing, is at best partial, at worst distorting. The human couple now moves to heal the rift by looking mainly, if not solely, to one another. They turn inward, "we two against a sea of troubles." Mutual self-help and self-reliance are the order of the day. Love, born of wounded pride, still bears the marks and concerns of the proud. These marks and concerns painfully complicate the story of man and woman, as Rousseau (more astute than his high-minded "student," Kant) notes, addressing precisely this same transformation of human love in his *Second Discourse*:

The passing intercourse demanded by nature soon leads to another kind no less sweet and more permanent through mutual frequentation. People grow accustomed to consider different objects and to make comparisons; imperceptibly they acquire ideas of merit and beauty which produce sentiments of preference. By dint of seeing one another, they can no longer do without seeing one another again. A tender and gentle sentiment is gradually introduced into the soul and *at the least obstacle becomes an impetuous fury*. Jealousy awakens with love, discord triumphs, and the gentlest of the passions receives sacrifices of human blood. . . . Each one began to look at the others and to want to be looked at himself, and public esteem had a value. The one who sang or danced the best, the handsomest, the strongest, the most adroit, or the most eloquent became the most highly considered; and that was the first step toward inequality and, at the same time, toward vice. From these first preferences were born on the one hand vanity and contempt, on the other shame and envy; and the fermentations caused by these new leavens eventually produced compounds fatal to happiness and innocence.

The biblical story, at this stage, can hardly show all these difficulties, especially because it features only one man and one woman. But all these passions and their potentially violent effects are born with pride and shame, as we learn from the stories that follow in the sequel, beginning immediately with Cain and Abel. Welcome though it may be, the lovability of self-esteem is not

necessarily good for love.

Yet, again returning to our text, we discover another new possibility that is also now open to the lovers—if they are not so self-absorbed that they are unable to attend. Right after they made themselves girdles, the man and the woman show their first real openness to or awareness of the divine. Immediately after clothing themselves, reports the biblical author (3:8), “they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the Garden,” the first explicit mention that any human being *really* attended to or even noticed the divine presence. In recognizing our lowliness we can also discover what is truly high.

It is a delicate moment: having followed eyes to alluring temptations, promising wisdom, human beings came to see, again through their eyes, their own insufficiency. Still trusting appearances, but seeking next to beautify them, they set about adorning themselves, in order to find favor in the sight of the beloved. Lustful eyes gave way, speechlessly, to admiring ones, by means of intervening modesty. Yet sight and love do not alone fully disclose the truth of our human situation—or of the story of man and woman. Human beings must open their ears as well as their eyes, they must hearken to a calling, for which sight and the beautiful beloved do not sufficiently prepare them and from which they can be deflected by reposing their love and longing solely with each other. The prototypical human pair, opened by shamefaced love, were in fact able to hear the transcendent voice.

VI

The ensuing conversation with this transcendent voice is, on its face, hardly encouraging; God conducts an inquest, extracts a confession, pronounces sentence. New passions emerge in the human soul, most notably a higher kind of shame,* guilt, and that remarkable mixture of fear-and-reverence called awe. Shame implies the peculiarly human concern with self-perfection, guilt the sense of personal responsibility, whereas awe recognizes powers not under human control and beyond human comprehension, before which we feel shamefully small. We cannot here attempt a full analysis of the text; we shall concentrate only on those aspects that concern the relation of man and woman. But we observe, in passing, the major features of the new human condition, announced and foretold in God’s speech to the newly awakened pair, within which the story of man and woman will hereafter—and irreversibly—unfold.

* The shame before God seems to be different from the shame before each other. Before each other, man and woman hide only their genitalia. Before God, they seek to hide themselves completely. The first—what the Greeks call *aischynē*—is social shame, and bespeaks a concern with the beautiful or the noble (*kalon*), with looking good. The second—what the Greeks call *aidos*—is “cosmic” or “ontological” shame, and bespeaks a concern with intrinsic worth under the aspect of the eternal and the divine.

(1) There is the (partial) estrangement of humankind from the world (or nature), evidenced by (a) enmity between serpent and woman; (b) partial alienation of man from the earth, upon which he must now toil for his food; and (c) pain of childbirth, implying conflict even within the (female) human body. (2) There is division of labor, defined relative to work: the one gives birth, the other tills. (3) There is the coming of the arts and crafts: no more just picking fruit and gathering nuts, but agriculture—the artful cultivation of the soil, the harvesting of grain, its transformation into flour, the making of bread, and, eventually, also astronomy (to know the seasons and to plan for sowing), metallurgy (to make the tools), the institution of property (to secure the fruits of one’s labor), and religious sacrifices (to placate the powers above and to encourage rain). (4) And there is rule and authority. To sum it up in one word: civilization. The “punishment” for trying to rise above animality is to be forced to live like a human being.

The so-called “punishment” seems to fit the so-called “crime,” in at least two ways. If the crime of transgression represents the human aspiration to self-sufficiency and godliness (free choice necessarily implying humanly grounded knowledge of good and bad), the so-called punishment thwarts that aspiration by opposition: human beings instead of self-sufficiency receive estrangement, dependence, division, and rule. Second, and more profound, the so-called punishment punishes fittingly by making clear the unanticipated meaning of the choice and desire implicit in the transgression itself. Like Midas with his wish for the golden touch, like Achilles with his desire for glory, the prototypical human being gets precisely what he reached for only to discover that it is not exactly what he wanted. He learns, through the revealing conversation with God, that his choice for humanization, wisdom, knowledge of good and bad, or autonomy really means at the same time also estrangement from the world, self-division, division of labor, toil, fearful knowledge of death, and the institution of inequality, rule, and subservience. Indeed, I am inclined to think that the so-called punishment is not really a newly instituted condition that a willful God introduces against the human grain, but rather a making clear of just what it means to have chosen enlightenment and freedom, just what it means to be a *rational* being. The punishment, if punishment it is, consists mainly in the acute *foreknowledge* of our now natural destiny to live out our humanity under the human condition.

Central to this bittersweet foreknowledge is a new dimension—or, rather, a new awareness of a hitherto invisible dimension—to the meaning of our sexual being: sex means generativity. Beyond lust for union and beyond romance, the meaning of man and woman has much to do with children, whether we know it or not. This aspect of the story of man and woman—and especially our awareness of it—gravely complicates the picture, introducing further new prospects, on the one hand, for

divergence and conflict, on the other hand, for unification and harmony. Let's take the bad news first. The capacity to bear children is, to say the least, a mixed blessing for the woman. "Unto the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy pregnancy; in pain thou shalt bear children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.'" (3:16) First, there is the burden of pregnancy and the pain of childbirth. Why is human childbirth painful? Largely because of the disproportion between the child's large human head and the relatively small birth canal. The human capacity for reason and freedom, embraced in the "transgressive" rise to humanhood and embodied in the enlarged cranium, comes at heavy bodily cost to the woman, indeed, often, with risk to her very life. Furthermore, this bodily conflict between the mother and her emergent child anticipates the often much more painful act of separation, when the child, exercising the newly awakened powers made possible by his large head, reaches for his own autonomous knowledge of good and bad, and repeats the original rise and fall from obedience and innocence in the ever-recurring saga of human freedom and "enlightenment." But, second, the fact of maternity also brings with it, *quite naturally*, new, unequal, and potentially difficult relations between woman and man.

How is this to be understood? What are we to make of this vexed passage, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over you"? Many contemporary readers see here the arbitrary institution of patriarchy: a sexist text, written by males to justify the domineering ways of man toward woman, shamelessly invokes the divine will to support the male prerogative, held to be legitimate because it was womanly weakness that cost man immortal bliss. Such readers read tendentiously and thoughtlessly. Let us consider another alternative, which takes the story to be more descriptive than prescriptive, and which therefore reads God's speech as *revealing prophecy* rather than as justifying punishment.

Woman, burdened naturally by pregnancy and nursing, burdened longer than females of other species because of the lengthy period of gestation and the still lengthier period of dependency of human infants, has trouble going it alone. More attached both bodily and psychically to the young, she feels sooner, more acutely, and more powerfully than the man an attachment to her own young. Precisely because her love may now be said to be divided (between her children and her husband), paradoxically, her now focused love for her children causes her desire also for her husband to grow more focused and more intense. Whereas, as lustful, man looked fixedly at woman (any woman?) as his missing bodily half, woman, as generative, turns her broader desire on her particular husband as provider for and protector of her children, and as partner in their rearing. (We recall the female reproductive strategy, operative throughout the mammalian world: enlist all the help you can in support of your very few eggs and their living outcomes.) How to gain the male's cooperation and

permanent presence? Domesticate him, perhaps by offering him or allowing him to rule—or to appear to rule. Or, more likely, once domesticated, he may simply *take* power, being physically stronger. To be sure, this is not a matter of conscious scheming or explicit contract. Rather, the text suggests, nature itself as generative "conspires" and beguiles in this direction, and arranges things in this new, more permanent, and seemingly hierarchical way.

Division of labor, implicit in generation and therefore in sexual difference as such, would, by itself, sow seeds of conflict. Especially if one's work reflects, expresses, and also fosters differences of body and soul, different work means at least partly different outlooks and sensibilities. From differences of outlook come differences of opinion and interest. This possibility of conflict of interest itself points to the need for rule and authority, especially when the unruly children start to emerge. Yet the institution of rule itself carries with it, inevitably, the likelihood of inequality and, hence, the possibility of much greater conflict: on one side, insensitivity and abuse of power, on the other side, abasement, envy, and resentment. True, the genuine ruler rules in the interest of the ruled; the tyrant is not, strictly speaking, a ruler. True, rule imposes on the ruler heavy burdens, cares, and responsibilities, not borne by the ruled. True, in the absence of children, greater male strength might simply have led to dominance on the basis of lust and might. Against this background, both the woman's desire for her husband, and his need through support to prove himself worthy of her desire, protect—at least at first—burdened and weaker woman from simple tyranny and, even more, from abandonment. But rule and power very often corrupt; and, in any case, distinction and inequality related to children and domesticity threaten always to mar the bliss of the happy lovers, previously indifferent to their generative *telos*.

Subsequent stories in Genesis do indeed show the great dangers of male domination and exploitation of women. For example, we have the rapacious conduct of the sons of God toward the daughters of man (6:2), which (like the rape of Helen) heralds the chaotic battles of the heroes, leading God to flood the earth and start again with Noah. Or we note with disgust the predatory behavior of Pharaoh who rounds up beautiful women for his harem (12:14-15). Or, again, there is Lot's sacrificing his daughters to the Sodomites (19:8) or the Hivite prince's rape of Dinah (34:2). Indeed, the coming of God's preferred new way, begun with Abraham, seeks a decisive shift in what I am calling the uninstructed or natural male attitude toward woman, through education—beginning with Abraham's trip to Egypt where he learns that God abhors the Pharaoh's treatment of women and that He defends the virtue of Sarah, the singular wife and future matriarch. Judaism partakes heavily not only of domestication but also of what could once be called (not by its friends) "feminization." Yet the possibility of such softening is, in fact, naturally grounded. Indeed,

as our present text shows, it rests on an utterly spontaneous male reaction to news of the new dispensation.

The end of God's speech to the woman, "and he shall rule over thee," leads God to turn next to *adam*, the being who just learned of his future position as ruler. The report is hardly cheering:

Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed be the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. (3:17-19)

Sorrow, sweat, toil, and death: the dusty earth opposes his needs, resists his plow, and, finally, devours him whole. The new "ruler" has no reason to revel in his new trappings of office—not least because he soon will have many mouths to feed.

Man's immediate response is reported in one of the most beautiful and moving sentences of the entire Torah:

And the man called his wife's name Eve (*Chavah*), because she was the mother of all living (*chai*).

The man hears the prophecy of the hardship and trouble that he unwittingly purchased with his enlightenment, but he does not despair. Guided by one glimmer in God's speech to the woman, the soul-saving passion of *hope* fixes his mind on the singular piece of good news: "My God! She is going to bear children!" Woman alone carries the antidote to disaster—the prospect of life, ever renewable. With revelational clarity, the man sees the woman in yet another new light, this time truly: not just as flesh to be joined, not just as another to impress and admire, but as a generous, generating, and creative force, with powers he can only look up to in awe and gratitude. Despite the forecast of doom, man's soul is lifted by the redemptive and overflowing powers of woman. He names her anew, this time with no reference to himself: only now, at last, is she known as Eve, source of life and hope.* This, far more than the burdensome

* The woman at this point keeps silence; thus, we do not know her reaction either to God's prophetic speech or to the man's effusive reaction and (her) renaming. Cynics will argue that it is just like a man to glory in his wife's fecundity, while she, again, must grin—or grit her teeth—and bear them. But as the sequel shows, the woman revels in her exalted status as creator: upon the birth of Cain, the first born, it is Eve who boasts of her creative power while Adam is speechless, and Cain bears the name of her pride. See my essay, "A Woman for All Seasons," *Commentary*, September 1991.

promise of rule, will attach the man devotedly to the woman. This will or should soften arbitrariness and moderate opposition. Children, a good now common to each, hold together and harmonize what sexual differentiation sometimes threatens to drive apart.

Despite the hardships connected with their rearing, no one who understands would see children mainly as a burden. A child is good because being is good, because life is good, because the renewal of human possibility is good. One's child is a good that is one's own, though it is good not *because* it is one's own; rather, one's own children become one's own share of that good—which-is-children. Through children, male and female finally achieve some genuine unification (beyond the mere sexual "union" which fails to do so): the two become one through sharing generous (not needy) love for this third being as good. Flesh of their flesh, the child is the parents' own comingled being externalized, and given a separate and persisting existence; unification is enhanced also by their comingled work of rearing. Providing an opening to the future beyond the grave, carrying not only our seed but also our names, our ways, and our hope that they will surpass us in goodness and happiness, children are a testament to the possibility of transcendence. Gender duality, which first drew man's love upward and outside of himself (and his preoccupation with self-preservation), finally provides for the partial overcoming of the confinement and limitation of perishable embodiment altogether.

Needless to say, man and woman in the garden, anticipating children, would not speak of them in this way. If the desire to bear children depended on such philosophizing, the race would have long since become extinct. Rather, nature has "conspired" to make children attractive, lively, responsive, and lovable—directly and immediately. Nature has "conspired" to make parents take joy in children and to love them from the start, and even when they don't deserve it. Yet these simple passions embody and do the heavy work that the being of man and woman itself intends.

The primordial story of man and woman thus points forward to the household, to that first institution of humanity that is devoted finally to rearing the next generation. As Rousseau would put it centuries later, describing this aspect of nascent humanity:

The first developments of the heart were the effect of a new situation, which united husbands and wives, fathers and children, in a common habitation. The habit of living together gave rise to the *sweetest sentiments known to man: conjugal love and paternal love*. Each family became a little society all the better united because *reciprocal affection and freedom* were its only bonds. . . .

True, the innocence of this picture, though genuine, is partial and misleading. There are, as already noted, seeds of future trouble, which Rousseau, in fact, highlights

in the immediate sequel:

and it was then that the first difference was established in the way of life of the two sexes, which until this time had had but one. Women became more sedentary and grew accustomed to tend the hut and the children, while the men went to seek their common subsistence.

The implications of these divisions become thematic in the subsequent tales in Genesis; controversies springing from them trouble us to the present day, and, in my view, will continue to do so indefinitely. Still, one sees in generative love and its attendant institution, family life, the basis for the deepest union of man and woman, and the one toward which sexuality as such surely points.

It would be false to the Torah to leave matters here, though we are obliged to do so for now. The tale of the Garden of Eden can hardly be called a success story, nor is the new familial dispensation a simple or sufficient remedy. Parental interest in children is not always wholesome, and neither are the children. Indeed, were we to finish the story of prototypical man and woman—which does not end with their expulsion from Eden but continues through the story of their children in the next chapter—we would discover immediately the dangers of woman's pride in her child-bearing powers and of jealous sibling rivalry to the point of fratricide. Throughout the book of Genesis, we see troubled families and the trouble families cause, even as the family principle is endorsed and even sanctified. There is parental favoritism (Isaac for Esau, Rebekah for Jacob), more sibling rivalry (Rachel and Leah, Joseph and his brothers), and filial rebellion (Ham toward Noah). And even in the best case, Abraham's pride in his first-born must be circumscribed in the covenant, and his love for the long-awaited Isaac must be subordinated to his reverence for the Lord—precisely to prove that he is fit to be the father of his people. Yet it was the miraculously delivered promise of a son to Abraham and Sarah—and God's refusal to allow his sacrifice—that completed Abraham's initiation into the way of God. Rightly understood, the love of one's own children and the love of the divine go hand-in-hand.

VII

What have we learned from this old story about man and woman? Reading anthropologically and descriptively, in the way we have attempted, we see more sharply the various inherent elements—somatic, psychic, and social—of our own gendered and engendering existence; and we see how the tensions among them are almost guaranteed to cause trouble, both for thought and action. There is our sexually neutral, needy, private, and self-loving interest in our own personal survival and well-being. There is complementary sexual duality without, experienced as needy incompleteness within, issuing in animal-like lust for bodily union—perhaps

more powerfully felt in the male. There is, as in all sexual beings, a built-in nonconscious bifurcation in our nature, in both males and females, because sexual impulses directed outwardly toward another are in principle in conflict with self-interested impulses directed toward self-preservation. There is the differentiation into two sexes, with nonidentical desires and interests, whose differences both incite union and also threaten divorce. There is human sexual self-consciousness, and rational consciousness more generally, that add yet an additional (reflective) kind of bifurcation to the human soul, part of whose meaning is expressed imaginatively in shame, modesty, refusal, adornment, flirtation, courtship, display, approbation, acceptance, rejection, beautification, illusion, vanity, coquetry, aspiration, flattery, wiliness, seduction, jealousy, the desire to please, and the search for self-esteem—all intrinsic aspects of the humanization of sex, the sublimation of lust, and the possibility of love and sociability. There is the strange problem of distance and desire that results from the inexplicable connection between sexuality and the love of the beautiful, as beauty beheld at the viewing distance drives us toward merging, unbeautifully and sightlessly, at no distance whatsoever. There is generativity and childbirth, followed by domestication and rearing, and all that that implies, including concern for lineage and hope for transcendence—of privacy, duality, and perishability. Finally, there is, through sexual self-consciousness, an opening to the truly transcendent and eternal, whatever it may be, best evidenced in the experience of (a) wonder at the beautiful beloved; (b) respect before the mystery of sexual complementarity and its peculiarly human self-conscious and imaginative embodiment; (c) awe in the face of life and sex and love and other great powers not of our making and not under our command; and (d) gratitude for the unmerited gift of creative powers exercisable through procreative handing-down of our living humanity to the next generation.

All these elements can, of course, be clothed by culture, and altered by customs, rituals, beliefs, and diverse institutional arrangements. But the elements themselves are none of them cultural constructions, nor is there likely to be any conceivable cultural arrangement that can harmonize to anyone's satisfaction all their discordant tendencies. On the contrary, political and cultural efforts to rationally solve the problem of man and woman—and we are, to be frank, in the midst of such utopian spasms—will almost certainly be harmful, even dehumanizing—to man, to woman, and especially, to children—not least because the matters are so delicate and private, and their deeper meanings inexpressible.

Beyond this counsel of moderation, we gather some psychosocial suggestions, positive and negative. For example, we come to understand the importance of modesty and shame for the cultivation of lasting love; for when the mutual and willing exposure of nakedness is understood by each as a gift to one's beloved and

is received gladly and without contempt, love declares itself triumphantly indifferent to our frailty and finitude. Or we see why deliberately childless unions, or marriageless childbearing, or the sexual revolution, or women's liberation, or unisexuality in looks and deeds, or the absence of courtship, or prenuptial contracts, or no-fault divorce, or our willful insistence solely on personal self-fulfillment might weaken commitments, encourage male predation, and leave women more vulnerable and children more neglected. And, finally, we begin to see why it is complementarity—the heterosexual difference—and not just doubleness that may point the way to human flourishing altogether.

To develop this last, most positive suggestion requires that we read much more of the Torah; yet this first story provides some hints. Despite all the dangers that

accompany the humanization of sexuality, we see through this story a possible direction toward human fulfillment. Conscious love of the complementary other draws the soul outward and upward; in procreation, love overflows generously into creativity, the child unifying the parents as sex or romance alone never can; and the desire to give not only life but a *good way of life* to their children opens both man and woman toward a concern for the true, the good, and the holy. Parental love of children may be the beginning of the sanctification of life—yes, even in modern times. Perhaps that is what God was thinking when He said that it is not good for the human being—neither for man nor for woman—to be alone. Perhaps this is why “male and female created He them.” (1:27) [☞]

Transfiguration

The alarm sinks its teeth
into my ear. I drag out
of our warm bed. Another
winter day breaks
in fragments of nightmare.
The sun hasn't shown,
afraid to face this growling wind
and the thousands of dreary
commuters going nowhere beyond
the dollar sign and grave marker.

I punch on the light and you
roll back over, “love you’s”
exchanged ritually. Baby begins
to cry. I dash for his milk,
one arm in my coat, trailing
dismay, late, late as usual
and tired as this old house
with its peeling paint and cracked bricks.

You hold our son. He smiles,
calls to me and you smile,
that sweet uncertain way.
The sun sends its first weak rays
through this east facing room,
catches, frames you just as I turn
to leave. This narrow space opens;
your honey curls, his cap of gold
blaze—madonna and child.

B.R. Strahan

Abortion and the Actualized Self

Camille S. Williams

The Choices We Made (Angela Bonavoglia, 1990) is the latest collection of sympathetic abortion narratives, a genre Gloria Steinem refers to as “populist truth-telling,” “the heart and soul of movements and revolutions all over the world.” As may be expected from a book excerpted in *Ms.*, many of the narrators are notables—Grace Paley, Elizabeth Janeway, Polly Bergen, Whoopi Goldberg—and few believe that their decisions to abort were wrong.

Witnessing about abortion is designed not only to serve the immediate political purpose of galvanizing prochoicers but also to elicit compassion for the women who abort, as well as to seek tacit endorsement of their decision. Steinem sees the abortion fight in the U.S. as part of a worldwide movement to give individuals the right to reproductive freedom, “adding the female half of humanity to the goal of global democracy. And the point of democracy is not: *What* gets decided? The point is: *Who* decides?” Portraying the individual choice to abort in this way, as a step toward freedom for the entire human race, invites women to see the sorrow they feel about their own abortions as part of a false consciousness instilled by a society determined to repress female sexuality.

Choices, like the half-dozen other books detailing the abortion experience, contains few narratives involving predicaments as terrible as that faced by women whose lives are endangered by pregnancy; much of the sorrow expressed seems as confused as the relationships that produced the unwanted pregnancies. An underlying message in many abortion narratives is that these poor women have already suffered enough; questioning their judgment will only make them feel worse.

Women’s experiences with abortion are unpleasant, to say the least, but because court decisions have privatized abortion, it is difficult to gather reliable

data about the immediate and long-term effects of abortion. Former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop concluded in 1989 that studies of post-abortion effects were all methodologically flawed. James L. Rogers’ review of research on the psychological consequences of abortion found that only one out of 300 studies could be considered valid (in James K. Hoffmeier, *Abortion: A Christian Understanding and Response*, 1987). Most studies displayed faults ranging from lack of control groups to use of biased and unreliable measuring instruments to the use of subjects who were either self-selected or selected by abortion clinic personnel. Koop recommended that a long-term study of large numbers of women be conducted to examine the effects of pregnancy, childbirth, and abortion. His conclusions have been interpreted by the popular press as support for liberal abortion policies.

“Is There Angst After Abortion?” queried the July 1989 issue of *Mademoiselle*. The article pooh-poohs “post-abortion syndrome,” declaring it to have been “soundly debunked” by Koop and the American Psychological Association. It heralds a study of sixty-three women confirming “dozens of others concluding that the most common post-abortion reactions are positive ones—relief, happiness, a sense of renewed control.” The “vast majority” of those sixty-three women also felt that they’d made a “wise decision.”

Similar evidence that abortion is helpful rather than *Shurtful* is presented by the Alan Guttmacher Institute in a study that reveals that fully three-quarters of 19,000 women surveyed who had had an abortion “reported that having a baby would have seriously interfered with work, school, or other major responsibilities.” (This should come as no surprise to anyone who has ever cared for a child, an aged parent, or a sick friend.) “And even if some women weather post-abortion bouts of depression or guilt,” continues the article, “studies show that these periods are usually short-lived.” The researcher quoted here, Jeanne Parr

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Lemkau, concludes that “Ambivalence about abortion is *normal*—it doesn’t mean you have psychological problems.” Nor does it mean you have made the wrong decision, the author of the article adds, again quoting Lemkau, “only an emotionally significant one.”

The article reflects the currently common belief that ambivalence is normal, guilt is not. Whatever decision a woman makes, simply because *she* makes it, is right—even if she feels bad about it. The author also solicitously warns against post-abortion “support groups” run by “phony counseling clinics,” where proliferators “typically feature a repent-your-sins format and a heavy dose of anti-choice education.”

Narratives about the abortion experience show that there is plenty of pain to go around, even for prochoice women. There are fewer accounts of how women heal after abortion. Obviously, the process differs from woman to woman, but even recognizing the need to heal is impeded by lack of knowledge about negative reactions to abortion. A support group called Women Exploited by Abortion (WEBA) has produced a pamphlet called “Surviving Abortion,” in which it is noted that “many women are surprised to find themselves grieving an aborted child because the abortion was—more or less—a voluntary act; but that is all the more a reason to grieve—the added dimension of responsibility—or guilt—intensifies the grief.”

WEBA members refuse to let others trivialize their pain and encourage women who have aborted to acknowledge the sorrow they feel.

You may be led to believe, by doctors, abortion facility counselors, or other “family planning” personnel, by other women who have had abortions, psychiatrists, parents, husband, or boyfriend that your grief is illegitimate. This frequently leads women to feel foolish, selfish or guilty about their grief and that just makes their already confused state more stressful. . . . There is a paternalistic attitude in the abortion field that seems to promote an opinion that an *uninformed* decision is a less painful one. We know that the opposite is true.

For some, healing begins the old-fashioned way: by acknowledging abortion to be a sin and repenting. These women testify that they are healed by Christ. For others, those convinced that morality is private, and that only they themselves can judge the rightness of their own actions, healing means accepting ambivalence, and perhaps offering comfort to others through public confession. That “ambivalence”—which is often a euphemism for equating good and evil—is apparently shared by those assisting in the abortions: their task is not to help women make the right decision, but to help women make it through the abortions they’ve already decided to have.

Sallie Tisdale, a nurse from an abortion clinic reveals in an article in the October 1987 *Harper’s Magazine*

(“We Do Abortions Here: A Nurse’s Story”): “There are weary, grim moments when I think I cannot bear another basin of bloody remains, utter another kind phrase of reassurance.” But she recognizes, she says, that “in abortion the absolute must always be tempered by the contextual, because both are real, both valid, both hard. How can we do this? How can we refuse?”

Those in Nurse Tisdale’s line of work must be brave enough to acknowledge, if not to administer, “necessary” medicine. She apportions counseling according to her judgment of the particular woman: “Some are stoic, some hysterical, a few giggle uncontrollably, many cry.” As they walk down the hall together, Nurse Tisdale tries to “gauge” the woman, tries “to get a sense of the words and the tone” she should use. “With some I joke, with others I chat, sometimes I fall into a brisk, business-like patter.” She asks every woman, “Are you sure you want an abortion?” Most, she says, nod with “knowing smiles.” Some seek her “forgiveness,” or offer excuses. Occasionally a woman will flinch at the sound of the A-word, and ask her not to use it.

And she is careful with her language, describing the procedure without saying “pain” or “baby.” But some women will interrupt her factual discussion of “the tissue” and “the contents” to ask how big “the baby is.”

These words suggest a quiet need for a definition of the boundaries being drawn. It isn’t so odd, after all, that she feels relief when I describe the growing bud’s bulbous shape, its miniature nature. Again I gauge, and sometime lie a little, weaseling around its infantile features until its clinging power slackens.

Nurse Tisdale seems unaware that her “weaseling around” might be interpreted as preventing informed consent; her intent is to help. This is a fearless woman acting out of a higher morality: she can see abortion for the “dirty work” that it is and still be willing to assist with “stark and loving dispassion” in the “sweet brutality” of abortion, which she calls a “merciful violence, like putting a suffering animal to death.”

She and the other clinic workers hide their own dubiety from their clients because abortion is a “matter of choice, privacy, control.” The clinic staff keep their ambivalence to themselves: “We are too busy to chew over ethics.” She in any case is convinced that she participates in a necessary evil, the necessity justifying her “complicity”:

At the end of the day I clean out the suction jars, pouring blood into the sink, splashing the sides with flecks of tissue. From the sink rises a rich and humid smell, hot, earthy, and mold-ering; it is the smell of something recently alive beginning to decay. I take care of the plastic tub

on the floor, filled with pieces too big to be trusted to the trash. . . . Abortion requires of me an entirely new set of assumptions. It requires a willingness to live with conflict, fearlessness, and grief. As I close the freezer door, I imagine a world where this won't be necessary, and then return to the world where it is.

If there is any solidarity between feminist health-care workers and clients, one would be hard put to find it in Tisdale's condescending compassion. A similar separation between professional and client is seen in psychiatrist B. R. Arnowitz's essay called "The Psychodynamics of Abortion" (included in a volume titled *Critical Psychophysical Passages in the Life of A Woman*, edited by Joan Offerman-Zuckerberg). "Anesthesia pops the lid off the id," clinic workers tell Arnowitz. Under anesthesia, women vocalize their conflicted states: "I had to do this. I didn't want to kill this baby. My husband didn't want it. My poor baby. I hate him." Religious and superstitious women appear to have the worst experiences, "apparently due to their guilt and consequent conflict."

In contrast to the religious/superstitious women are women who have a strong sense of self. They awaken from anesthesia "almost immediately, [and] handle postoperative cramping with only minor distress." For these women, even the first abortion is quite bearable. Dr. Arnowitz believes that "women with a history of self-soothing and self-tolerance or general ego strength in response to psychophysical events had the best preoperative and postoperative adjustment." These women tended to have "realistic expectations" about abortion, and "conveyed a healthy and trusting attitude about their sexuality, and most importantly, have incorporated the nurturant qualities of their own primary caretakers into their self-structure." The self-nurturant woman may even view the procedure "as a growth-promoting experience"; and "the circumstances surrounding the abortion may even be a self-enhancing occasion for the woman." Says Arnowitz:

One may expect that with evolving societal norms regarding women's roles and those specifically relating to sexual behavior and thus encompassing abortion, obtaining an abortion will decreasingly be viewed as deviant activity. Instead of being interpreted as a woman's feminine immaturity or incomplete socialization, abortion will be viewed as a viable and respectable option. In turn, shame and guilt over denial of maternal instinct, feeling of moral transgression, and maladaptive reactions based upon these constructs may likewise subside.

This feminist psychiatrist predicts "extremely negative psychological sequelae" should the "fundamental right to abortion as a legitimate option in attaining control over one's own bodily self be

suddenly renounced." The right to abortion is thus necessary for the "psychological integrity" of women.

Rosalind Petchesky, in *Abortion and Woman's Choice*, pushes the argument further. She acknowledges the tension between individual choice and collective purpose, declaring that there will always be a need for abortion. "Rather than apologize for abortion, feminists must proclaim loudly—as they did in the late 1960s and the early 1970s—that access to safe, funded abortion is a *positive social need* of all women of childbearing age." So "self-actualized" women ought to accept abortion as a necessary part of the healthy expression of their own sexuality.

But some women with strong selves have extremely negative experiences. They, too, feel pain. Sue Nathanson is a prochoice psychotherapist whose own abortion precipitated what she refers to as a "soul crisis," her name for an experience deeper than an intense emotional reaction to loss or trauma (*Soul Crisis: One Woman's Journey Through Abortion to Renewal*). "It involves the shattering of one's beliefs about oneself and one's life into fragments that cannot be put back together again in exactly the same way," forcing, she believes, "an assessment of one's basic mode of being in the world," and requiring the loss "of innocence and a simple worldview."

As with Tisdale, Arnowitz, and others, Nathanson sees her recovery as a personal act requiring a shift from innocence to ambivalence; she finds that she must learn to appreciate the darker powers of the self. "The work of restoration was essentially mine," she notes; "completing it successfully took years of psychological effort on my part, combined with the active support and assistance of others . . . and the help of myth and ritual. The shattered self must be reconstituted in a new way." In a sense, her reconstituted woman is the image of a New Age goddess, a creator and a destroyer whose actions are good even when destructive. As Maggi Cage explains it in *Woman of Power*, "The sacred act of creating has to do not only with creating, but with destroying as well." She commends cultures in which "abortion is viewed as one way of completing the sacred cycle that begins with sexuality," condemning the squeamish "white Western culture" in which *we* "don't want to accept responsibility for our destructive acts or our negative side, so we deny their existence." She warns that fear of our own "negative side" turns into shame and guilt. Unless "we embrace the totality of life by accepting both creation and destruction as natural parts of the flow of life, we will continue to turn away from our power and be at the mercy of those who will use shame and guilt to control us."

Nathanson, the archetypal new woman, is also fearless, or at least able to live with fear. She takes responsibility for her actions, but seems to think that taking responsibility necessarily makes the action right. *She* didn't *want* the abortion—she got it only

because “the choice of an abortion was essential for the well-being of everyone” in her family, though she still wishes she “could have chosen otherwise.”

She likes motherhood and says she “would have given anything to be able to climb one last time to the unparalleled peak of the mountain. But I made the best choice I could make with my rational mind. I did not anticipate how profoundly I would suffer emotionally, or how long my suffering would endure.”

If the aborted child seems forgotten in Nathanson’s focus on her own suffering, that is only a temporary lapse; the child is, after all, another means to self-actualization: motherhood envisioned as an “unparalleled peak of the mountain” of personal experience. The self unavoidably comes first, for only a well-cared-for self can serve the needs of others. Nathanson had to act *against* her own better instincts for the sake of herself and her family, her husband in particular.

This new ethic—that abortion is more moral than interrupting schooling or employment—is held not only by writers for New York fashion magazines and Californians infused with New Age spiritualism, but also by an aging feminist movement. Eleanor Smeal’s Fund for the Feminist Majority produced a video entitled “Abortion: for Survival,” which promotes the view that women cannot morally refuse—much less be denied—abortion in some instances. This argument is arrived at by equating the plight of starving African peoples with that of a young white woman in the U.S. having an abortion because she already has two children and feels she couldn’t possibly care adequately for a third. Emotions are further aroused by the sight of family members recalling the deaths of mothers and sisters from illegal abortions. This video and “No Going Back,” from the Federation of Feminist Women’s Health Centers in Los Angeles, discuss low-tech methods for menstrual extraction or early self-abortion.

The new feminist view, as advanced by Drucilla Cornell in the *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities*, as well as by others, recognizes that justifying abortion under the right to privacy has become problematical. Cornell embeds “the call of justice [for women]” into a discussion of “bodily integrity.” She acknowledges that in *Roe v. Wade* Justice Blackmun attempted to “heed the call to justice” by making abortion readily available to women. The “woman’s call to justice” that Cornell defends is warranted by women’s suffering “under the conditions women would again face if the *Roe* framework was dismantled,” that is, the requirement that a woman carry an unwanted pregnancy to term, travel to a state or country where abortion was legal, or seek an illegal abortion. While demanding respect for women who decide what is just for themselves, she views questions about the right to abortion (e.g., by Justices O’Connor and Rehnquist) as irresponsible acts of judging.

Placing the abortion discussion within the larger

context of bodily rights legitimizes abortion under any circumstance. The term “bodily integrity” covers a variety of issues related to “invasions” of the body—coerced abortion, mass testing for AIDS, forced sterilizations, or the use of mind-altering drugs on prisoners, children, or the aged. By locating abortion among the parade of horrors worldwide, it ends up not only tolerated but protected as a cherished right.

Do not mistake this right or duty to protect the self from unwanted pregnancy for anything so crass as a “me for me” mentality: nothing is more important to those around her than what Maggi Cage calls the “absolutely crucial” task of each woman to make a place where “she can be herself, recognize herself, and come face to face with herself” so that she may “regenerate” herself and her sacred power of creation.

While it is tempting to dismiss Cage as extreme, and to caricature the Nathansons as a yuppie couple, each with their respective therapists and programs of exercise and diet, dismissals and caricatures will probably not invite them to see things differently. Certainly it is hard to see how an individual can save her own self from the pain of her self-chosen course. This for Nathanson is a psychological task that at first seemed “overwhelming” and ultimately required “every iota” of knowledge she had gained through her study and practice of psychology—particularly the art of not sacrificing *too* much for her children: “Central to the mothering instinct within me is a predisposition to recognize and meet the needs of my children, voluntarily sacrificing my own at times when there is a conflict.”

She actually considers the possibility of giving birth to a fourth child, but her husband sees the needs of the family more objectively, reminding her that he doesn’t want another child and has his high blood pressure and high cholesterol “to deal with.” He feels that caring for another child will “kill” him.

The word *kill* chills her, bringing home to her “the extent of Michael’s worry about himself.” She responds with surprising empathy for her husband, who is “probably for the first time in his life beginning to pay attention to his own needs” and must now face the problem of having fathered a fourth child. “My heart aches for him, and for myself, but we are not talking about the choice of whether to conceive a child; this child is a reality, taking shape already deep within my body.”

But maybe for some reason we’re supposed to have this baby, she suggests. Her husband reminds her of their current responsibilities, suggesting instead that it is as easy to argue that it is their “fate” to have to make “an incredibly difficult decision.” “We’re only limited human beings,” he argues. “Can’t you see that we’re being very responsible to ourselves and to our living children by making the difficult choice not to have a child?”

“Awash in love for him,” Nathanson does what any

well-educated woman with a strong self-structure would do: she makes *his* decision her own. "I will take responsibility for the decision that must be made. . . . I will have an abortion. . . . I do not want to enter into a life-and-death battle with this man whom I love and who shares my life."

She attempts to consult her own physician, but he's out of town; his associate schedules the abortion, and Nathanson prepares her emotional self, her soul, for the ordeal—being careful not to slight her responsibilities to her family and clients. But her preparation is inadequate; her controlled self is challenged by innate reluctance to have the abortion:

In minutes I am taken to an operating room, brightly lit and filled with gleaming medical instruments and neatly packaged supplies. These are the tools of modern science. Where are the tools that will help my soul?

She considers the nurses "compassionate and sensitive"; describes herself as "always controlled, cooperative, compliant, an excellent patient, automatically responsive to the needs and feeling of others," who is "shocked" when her grief breaks through her "normally strong controls." Naked, she sobs quietly as she climbs upon the cold and narrow table.

Her extreme sorrow after the abortion is genuine, but her only source of strength is her own empty "wounded soul," lost, as she says, "in anguish that I never imagined I could possibly feel." In her "soul-agony," she wants to tear her skin, to rip out her insides and strew them across the bed she shares with her husband until there is "no life left within."

As it turns out, the abortion was incomplete. With signs of pregnancy persisting, she fantasizes that somehow she has not lost her child, somehow the abortion failed. Her unreasonable hope is ended with a phone call telling her that the pathologist found living tissue. She is "flooded with a torrent of horror" and is swept into "a dark fog of nausea." She vividly recalls, "Alone, I sob for myself, my child, the remains, the child smeared into bits by the vacuum aspirator, sucked from the warmth of my womb in a violent moment of death." She sees herself as "a shriek of horror and anguish, straining with all my might somehow to reverse what cannot be reversed, what is irrevocable. I do not know, I cannot imagine, how I will be able to live with the horror of what *is*, the horror that I alone have caused."

Her therapist, family, and friends try to help her by assuring her that she made *the right decision*; none of them understands her pain. She decides to be sterilized as she struggles to accept the abortion as "right." She doesn't want to end her fertility any more than she wanted the abortion, but is "terrified" not only that she will become pregnant again, but also that she will deliberately have a child in an attempt

to make the loss of her fourth child tolerable. She can no longer trust what some of us might think of as her better side, explaining that if she had another child she would feel even worse because she would be admitting that the decision to have the abortion was a dreadful mistake, admitting that she and her husband "could in fact have managed to care for another life."

Her inability to make the abortion *feel* right takes her toward suicide, destruction of the self:

In preventing my fourth child from having a life, I have unwittingly fractured my own; like Humpty Dumpty, my life, my self, is beyond repair. I have made a decision that I am utterly unable to integrate into my sense of who I am. The strength of my belief in the "rightness" of the choice of an abortion given the context of my life and in the necessity for women to have the legal right to make the choice that I exercised enabled me to carry out my decision; but these convictions do not protect me from suffering the consequences of my choice.

Her husband talks her out of suicide, and she is eventually "saved" by a relatively inexperienced therapist (who has also recovered from a traumatic abortion). Responding to Gestalt techniques, Nathanson becomes convinced that her child was one manifestation of Life, and that while she stopped him (she has a feeling the child was a son), she is not really capable of stopping the Great Life Force, she is merely part of it. In a way, she imagines the child's forgiving her.

She learns to see her abortion decision as painful, difficult, but right. It is her intent to encourage the general public to understand and have compassion for women who abort. She remains distressed that the woman who aborts is "judged . . . either for the choice she makes or her reaction to the experience." She laments that prochoice advocates see the woman who suffers "guilt and despair to be out of touch with her own needs, either deficient in feminist consciousness or victimized by Right-to-Life propaganda"; prolife advocates perceive the woman who displays no feelings as "inhuman and insensitive or as a victim of a culture that permits her to be indifferent to the value of life and provides her with no other options."

Nathanson advocates better training for therapists, so that the psychological needs of women who abort can be addressed, allowing women "to develop themselves psychologically." Women, in her view, need to "accept the consciousness of having the power and capacity to choose to end a life that is also part of their very own being." She wants women who choose abortion to be protected from the judgments of others, shielded while they "confront their own inner judges."

Because patriarchal culture has little sympathy for women who abort or kill their children, Nathanson feels that there are no "existing structures" to help women

“weave” the abortion experience “into the ongoing creation of their souls.” “Women in our culture who can’t suppress or repress their experience of abortion must bear the burden of their consciousness alone.” She advises that the consciousness of power and responsibility be borne with courage, grace, and dignity.

She laments that there are few therapists who can help women who refuse “to seal over the experience of abortion,” who refuse to deny its importance and meaning, and “who want to connect it with its deep roots in elemental feminine experience.” She finds it significant that patriarchal stories of fathers sacrificing their children, such as Agamemnon and Abraham, elicit empathy, while the story of Medea is viewed with abhorrence rather than compassion.

Nathanson blends the notions of sacrifice and murder into a neat package of potential power. Women who can accept themselves as both creators and destroyers are considered healthy and compassionate, able to extend nonjudgmental support toward the act of abortion as well as to the woman who aborts. Of course, making meaning of an experience requires judgment. In the end, Dr. Nathanson judges the experience of abortion as implicitly good.

Soul-crises such as mine, if experienced within an empathic and compassionate human relationship, within a culture that makes room for them without judgment and condemnation, have the possibility of becoming opportunities for personal growth and transformation rather than dreadful experiences simply to be endured and survived.

A necessary evil, through the miracle of modern psychology, is transformed into a positive good. Petchesky recalls a sense of “buoyancy” after *Roe*, “because abortion—easily available, cheap, administered under safe, hygienic conditions early in a pregnancy and in an ambience free of stigma and guilt—is a component (not just a condition) of women’s liberation.” She sees clearly the reason that women who abort feel bad about it.

What makes abortion “awful” is the shame and guilt caused by two heavily ideological notions that all women in the society still learn to some degree: (1) the association of fetus with “baby” and the aborting woman with “bad mother,” and (2) the assumption that sex for pleasure is “wrong” (for women) and that women who indulge in it have to pay a price.

Ap^art from the question of whether women have to “pay” for their sexual activity is the fact that women *do* pay dearly for their abortions. This undeniable pain is part of the contradictory stance of those endorsing abortion: feminists don’t want to trivialize the impact of abortion, but feel pressed to

prove that abortion is medically and psychologically safe; each woman must decide for herself about abortion, but there is no common ground upon which to make the decision, and onlookers are not allowed to judge the rightness or wrongness of another person’s decision; having “options” is more valuable than the morality of exercising any one option. Those who believe most fervently in private morality are most anxious that the community as a whole not merely tolerate abortion, but respect it, provide it, and fund it. Cut off from traditional values of the church, the law, and the state, personal experience is elevated to the status once accorded those foundations for communal good.

Rosemary Radford Ruether, in *Woman-Church*, provides the “new words, new prayers, new symbols” that will free women from patriarchy and allow them “to live the new humanity now.” Her community prayer for the rite of healing from an abortion clearly subordinates the judgment of the gods to that of the “supplicants.” What may have once been a prayer for forgiveness has become an indictment against gods sloppy enough to let unplanned pregnancies and other evils exist to plague us.

O great Mother and Father, power of all life and new life, we are sorrowful this day . . . we are also angry. . . . We are surrounded by a world in which vast numbers of people go to bed hungry and where many children come into the world unwanted and without the most minimal opportunities for love and development. We don’t want to create life that way. We want to create life that is chosen, wanted, and can be sustained and nourished. Our sister has made her hard choice. . . . We affirm and uphold her in her ongoing life, as she gathers her life together and centers her energies on how she is going to continue to sustain her own life and the lives around her which it nourishes.

Taking energy from sorrow and anger and “centering” it on the self is a common theme in abortion narratives, and in some of the rituals of recovery. The need to “speak out” suggests that the pain of abortion can be deep and long-lasting; communicating with others who have aborted establishes safety in numbers (surely millions of women *can’t* be wrong).

As the psychology of the self has turned the law, the church, and the academy into tools for self-actualization, our bonds to family and community have been loosened. Focusing on the self makes it impossible to see clearly beyond the self, impossible to transcend self-ish interests for the sake of one unseen, unborn. Women who elect to abort have made a bad bargain with technology. Their sad, absurd, too-common stories of human relationships awry serve to remind us that while self-deception may begin with individual choice, it is often sustained by collective collusion. [21]

Poverty & the Victim Ploy

William Voegeli

I

In 1936, Harry Hopkins made a speech defending the honor of the poor.

I am getting sick and tired of all these people on the W.P.A. and local relief roles being called chisellers and cheats. These people are just like the rest of us. They don't drink any more than us, they don't lie any more, they're no lazier than the rest of us—they're pretty much a cross section of the American people. . . . I have gone all over the moral hurdles that people are poor because they are bad. I don't believe it. A system of government on that basis is fallacious.

Fifty years later virtually the same words were spoken by Jesse Jackson at the 1988 Democratic national convention.

Most poor people are not lazy. . . . Most poor people are not on welfare. . . . They work hard every day. . . . They catch the early bus. They work hard every day. They raise other people's children. . . . They clean the streets. . . . They drive vans with cabs. . . . They change the beds you slept in [in] these hotels last night and can't get a union contract. They work hard every day. . . . Someone must defend them because . . . they cannot speak for themselves. They work in hospitals. . . . They wipe the bodies of those who are sick with fever and pain. They empty their bed pans. They clean out their commode. No job is beneath them, and yet when they get sick, they cannot lie in the bed they made up

every day. America, that is not right. We are a better nation than that.

Hopkins and Jackson were both engaged in a task central to the advocacy of the welfare state: denying any important differences between people who are poor and people who aren't. This denial serves three purposes. First, if the poor are just like the rest of us, then poverty is something that happens to people for reasons unrelated to their character or conduct. To hector the poor to be more diligent or thrifty is cruel and gratuitous. Second, if poverty is a calamity that simply befalls some people, then our sympathetic instinct to help those who suffer must not be restrained or mitigated by thoughts that we are encouraging the sort of conduct by the poor that perpetuates their poverty. The liberal ideal for the welfare state is the relief effort for victims of natural disasters, in which we alleviate a plight that can in no way be blamed on the behavior of those who suffer from it. And finally, if poverty can truly happen to anyone, then it is in the self-interest of people not currently poor to support a thorough and generous welfare state as a prudent recognition of the universality of susceptibility to hardship.

Defending the honor of the poor by insisting they are just like the rest of the population shores up liberalism at its most vulnerable point, namely, its inability to explain why people who don't benefit from the welfare state should acquiesce in the taxes that pay for it. The more closely those who are not poor identify with those who are, the easier it will be to secure their support for programs to help the poor, or persuade them that programs that help people regardless of how much they make have the same moral stature as programs directed to the poor.

Now while Hopkins and Jackson were saying the same thing, the historical conditions under which they were saying it were very different. The Depression

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made it easy for New Deal liberals to convince the country that harsh Darwinian ideas about poverty were wrong. The millions of Americans who were unemployed and impoverished surely *were* victims of an economic catastrophe. Clearly, they were not suddenly and inexplicably too lazy to care for themselves. Those Americans who still had their jobs in the 1930s could easily believe that better luck was all that distinguished them from their neighbors who were out of work. Knowing that their own fortunes might well change, they could envision how government programs that help people when they cannot help themselves could be their own salvation.

By the same token, the unprecedented economic growth that began after World War II steadily weakened the identification of the rest of society with the poor. The ever larger and more prosperous middle class found it increasingly difficult to believe that they were as susceptible to impoverishment as migrant farm workers or slum residents. For millions of Americans, this awareness of their own prosperity incorporated the knowledge of the numerous opportunities created in postwar America as well as the great efforts they and their peers had made in responding to those opportunities. To view the poor as people just like themselves, but with worse luck, would have required them to disparage their own sacrifices and achievements. A couple that had undergone the experience of night school or job transfers, that had taken on mortgages and the anxieties of raising children properly, could no longer look at the chronically poor and sincerely believe, as liberals insisted they must, "There but for the grace of God go I."

Liberals looked upon this change of heart sourly. After working on the Adlai Stevenson presidential campaign of 1952, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. summarized his candidate's defeat by saying, "Having been enabled by Democratic administrations to live like Republicans, the new suburbanites ended up voting like Republicans."

In the 1960s this kind of bitterness about the decline in the identification of the American majority with the poor was expressed more frequently and forcefully. As the poor became more anomalous in America, liberals became more insistent that the poor were not to be blamed for their poverty. No attempt to vindicate the honor of the poor was more comprehensive than a 1970 book called *Blaming the Victim* by William Ryan. It was a book whose title was to prove more memorable than its content; during the two decades since its publication "blaming the victim" has remained on the lips of politicians and intellectuals as a codified rebuke to any suggestion that people are poor because of what they have done or not done rather than because of what has been done to them or not done for them.

The admonition against blaming the victim is, strictly speaking, tautological. Victims are by definition people who are not responsible for what has

happened to them. The real argument, then, is not about whether to blame victims, but about who can and who can't legitimately lay claim to the designation.

II

The desire to bestow victimhood on virtually all poor people in America was dramatically intensified in the 1960s by the fusion of liberalism's civil rights agenda with its welfare state agenda. The problems of poverty and race had once been regarded as overlapping but distinct. John F. Kennedy, for example, is said to have encountered truly horrendous poverty in America for the first time during the 1960 West Virginia primary, not while campaigning in Harlem. At the same time, the civil rights movement was unwilling to turn its attention from fighting Jim Crow to fighting poverty. As Nicholas Lemann has written, "The [1963] March on Washington was officially billed as the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and its chief organizer, Bayard Rustin, was annoyed that King's overpowering 'I Have a Dream' speech effectively switched the focus from economic issues in the North to segregation in the South."

Rustin would not have to wait much longer for the poverty issue to become central to the politics of race relations. The 1963 march turned out to be one of the last moments in American history when it was possible to think of race as an especially Southern problem. The Watts riot erupted one week after the signing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the last great piece of civil rights legislation. By the time the riots ended in Watts—and Detroit, and Newark, and dozens of other cities—Americans understood that race was a much bigger problem than they had ever thought before. Liberals in particular believed that poverty in the Northern ghettos had become America's most urgent crisis.

The civil rights movement had coincided with the peak of liberals' confidence in their own ability to manage domestic and international affairs. Optimism about attainment of racial harmony was of a piece with the certainty that Keynesian economics and the containment doctrine were adequate to their tasks. Once the vestigial feudal legal structure of Southern segregation was dismantled, it was believed, blacks would follow other ethnic groups in taking advantage of the freedom to assimilate and prosper. Furthermore, the fight against segregation, while politically difficult, was morally simple. It appealed to a principled understanding of equality that could be traced back through Lincoln to Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence.

By the same token, the decline of liberalism coincided with, and to a large extent was caused by, the growing moral complexity and practical difficulty of pursuing racial justice after segregation had been

vanquished. The seeds of the troubles to come are visible in this passage from the famous speech President Johnson made at Howard University in 1965:

You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of the race and then say, "you are free to compete with all the others," and still justly believe that you have been completely fair.

Thus it is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates.

This is the next and more profound stage of the battle for civil rights. We seek not just freedom but opportunity—not just legal equity but human ability—not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as fact and as a result.

The new civil rights goal, then, was to "address the problems" caused by the history of legally sanctioned discrimination against blacks. As with most liberal directives, it is impossible to apply this one in a way that allows us to know whether we have satisfied its terms or not. Even allowing for Johnson's orotund rhetoric, it is unclear what his injunctions—opportunity, human ability, equality as a fact and as a result—will require in practice. But the policies and arguments that have been advanced for twenty-five years to give flesh to such aspirations make it possible to infer their meaning in theory. Slavery and segregation having been abolished, runs the argument, America must now transform itself into the society that would exist if these evils had never been practiced at all. Because the social evils bequeathed by the history of racial discrimination are enormous, this transformation will have to be, at the practical level, a prodigious reconstructive effort; and because America's legacy of racial bigotry is so deeply regrettable, the assumption of the burden of undoing it will be a necessary and profound act of atonement.

A fixture of liberal rhetoric in the late 1960s was the call for massive federal programs to end urban poverty—"Marshall Plans for our cities." The desire to redeem America from its history of racism made the rhetoric used to advance these programs more apocalyptic, and the recommended price tags larger, but did not otherwise force liberals to stretch themselves. Since the liberal instinct is to believe that every problem deserves a program, the discovery of a very big problem naturally required the creation of a very big program.

It was in coming to terms with the moral logic of its new understanding of the politics of race that liberalism was forced to enter uncharted and perilous terrain. The corollary of the increased emphasis on white culpability for the suffering of blacks was a new hesitancy about expressing expectations or judgments

of blacks' behavior. The enormity of America's history of oppression meant that the right of white people to expect any particular conduct from blacks, and the obligation of black people to comply with such expectations, were both severely attenuated. Black compliance with "white middle-class values" should no longer be taken for granted; such compliance involved, at best, heroic self-restraint, given the cruelties inflicted on blacks; at worst, it made blacks complicit in sabotaging the redress of their powerful grievances against America.

In other words, whites had no right to ask, and blacks had no duty to proffer, reassuring behavior. In the public arena, this meant that blacks were not obliged to "work within the system," given the brutality inflicted upon them by the system over the decades. No one winced in 1963 when President Kennedy characterized blacks' civic obligations as a component of their participation in the social contract: "We have a right to expect that the Negro community will be responsible, will uphold the law, but they have a right to expect that the law will be fair; that the Constitution will be color-blind. . . ." By the end of the 1960s, few liberals could bring themselves to insist on any such quid pro quo. Black compliance with the law was no longer something whites were entitled to expect. Liberals allowed that they could not condone rioting and law-breaking, but always hastened to point out that, in view of how blacks have suffered, they *understood* it. Sometimes the distinction between understanding and condoning shrank to invisibility. Hubert Humphrey concluded a description of the horrors of slum life in a 1966 speech by saying, "If I lived in such conditions, I could lead a mighty good revolt myself."

At the level of personal relationships, the new sensibility about race meant that whites had no right to ask for the psychological reassurance that came from false deference by blacks or unmerited displays of racial comity. "Integration" and "brotherhood" had been the ideals of the civil rights movement before 1965. But under the ensuing dispensation of hyper-awareness of the legacy of discrimination, whites dared not seek, and blacks dared not give, signs that there were, in spite of everything, "no hard feelings." Hard feelings were precisely what now constituted in the minds of white liberals the essential manifestation of black authenticity. Grave dignity and selflessness had characterized the civil disobedience of the Southern sit-ins and marches. Whites might still admire this heroic behavior, but this admiration was clouded by the belief that to insist on blacks' indefinite forbearance was impossible, and that, in light of the severe provocation, black behavior in fighting Jim Crow may have been, after all, insufficiently assertive. For many whites, the situation became a Catch-22: they continued to hope for the spirit of racial reconciliation that had characterized the civil rights movement, but

regarded blacks who actually behaved in conciliatory ways as untrue to the historic situation and destiny of their people.

Thus, in the political calculus that flowed from portraying racism as the central fact of American life, no white effort to redress the transgressions against the blacks was ever adequate, and no black challenge to the privileges or sensibilities of whites was ever excessive. The severity of this shift in the liberal outlook was displayed most vividly in the reaction to the 1965 report on the black family, issued by the Department of Labor and written by Daniel Patrick Moynihan when he was an assistant secretary there. The Moynihan report, observes Nicholas Lemann, "might be the single most refuted document in American history, a slim pamphlet to whose discrediting book after book has been devoted."

The most remarkable aspect about this reaction is that the Moynihan report itself took great pains to identify white bigotry as the fundamental cause of the breakdown of the black family: "There is a considerable body of evidence," says the report, "to support the conclusion that Negro social structure, in particular the Negro family, battered and harassed by discrimination, injustice, and uprooting, is in the deepest trouble." President Johnson's speech at Howard University, which Moynihan helped write, put forward the same argument:

Perhaps most important—its influence radiating to every part of life—is the breakdown of the Negro family structure. For this, most of all, white America must accept responsibility. It flows from centuries of oppression and persecution of the Negro man. It flows from long years of degradation and discrimination, which have attacked his dignity and assaulted his ability to provide for his family.

None of these efforts spared the Moynihan report from controversy. Its argument was that from 1948 to 1963 black male unemployment and the number of black families applying for Aid to Families with Dependent Children had been very closely correlated—reassuring evidence that a liberal program of full employment and job training would eliminate black poverty. But when these two statistics began to diverge, and AFDC cases increased despite falling unemployment rates among black males, Moynihan felt that changes within the black community were decoupling economic opportunity and family stability. His report argued that the new intervening variable was the breakdown of the black family. He cited statistics showing that one of every four black infants was now born out of wedlock, and employed vivid rhetoric to describe the "tangle of pathologies" that perpetuated itself in communities without cohesive families.

The civil rights leader James Farmer had a syndicated

newspaper column in 1965, and he used it to denounce the Moynihan report for providing "the fuel for a new racism."

By laying the primary blame for present-day inequalities on the pathological condition of the Negro family and community, Moynihan has provided a massive academic cop-out for the white conscience and clearly implied that Negroes in this nation will never secure a substantial measure of freedom until we learn to behave ourselves and stop buying Cadillacs instead of bread.

William Ryan's book *Blaming the Victim* was an expanded version of a critique of the Moynihan report he wrote for *The Nation*, titled "Savage Discovery." Twenty-five years later, *The Nation* was still enraged by the Moynihan report, denouncing it in a special issue called "Scapegoating the Black Family." One of the contributors to this issue, Jewell Handy Gresham, wrote:

[The] report served the time-tested purpose: Whenever the system is in crisis (or shows signs of becoming transformed); whenever blacks get restless (or show strength); whenever whites in significant numbers show signs of coming together with blacks to confront their mutual problems (or enemies), the trick is to shift the focus from the real struggle for political and economic empowerment to black "crime," degeneracy, pathology, and—in Moynihan's innovative twist—the "deterioration" of the black family.

By 1989, the black illegitimacy rate, which Moynihan found so alarming in 1965 when it reached 25 percent, was over 63 percent. Narcotics and lethal violence constituted a well-documented epidemic in the ghettos. Yet *The Nation* still felt constrained to use quotation marks in alluding to black "crime" and the "deterioration" of the black family, as if these were phenomena of dubious factuality. Clearly, an important part of the reaction to the Moynihan report was the belief that it was sinister, not because it had spread falsehoods, but because the truths it chose to examine were unfit for public discussion.

The avoidance of victim-blaming has, ever since the Moynihan report, mandated great efforts to police the boundaries of the undiscussable, and berate all who transgress them. Two rules, both deriving from the fundamental goal of nullifying every consequence of the legacy of American racism, control the determination of these boundaries. First, since racism must be completely expunged from America, the presentation of any data that might gratify racists or reinforce their beliefs is wrong. Second, and in particular, since white injustice against blacks is the crux of American

history, and indemnifying that injustice is America's most profound duty, any account suggesting that black people's problems or their progress can be explained by their own conduct, rather than in terms of social conditions determined by whites, is impermissible. James Farmer brought up the white conscience because it is *supposed* to be guilty—it has so much to be guilty about—and he condemned the Moynihan report because it might assuage that guilt.

Reverberations of those altered sensibilities are reflected in one participant's account of a 1965 White House conference on race (quoted in Lee Rainwater and William L. Yancey's *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy*):

There was a total refusal by most of the Negroes [I heard] to discuss *anything* that might remotely imply that there was anything whatsoever that Negroes, individually or collectively, should be doing or needed to do. [One leader's] formulation, which was repeated *ad nauseam*, was that race was entirely a white man's problem that could only be solved by white men, and that it was intolerable that the government had all these white men sitting around discussing "our problem." They simply refused to discuss anything but what the government ought to be doing. They even refused to discuss the question of how Negroes might mount more effective political pressure to force the government to institute the programs they were demanding.

White liberals who might once have joined this observer in being exasperated by such intransigence now took it to be their duty to go to almost any lengths to react "constructively." Did the attainment of racial justice require white initiatives and ingenuity, rather than black perseverance? Then initiatives and ingenuity there must be. Christopher Jencks, for example, expressed doubts that the black family was in as bad a shape as the Moynihan report claimed. But even if it were, he wrote, the problem could be solved by others:

If [poor black families] are matriarchal by choice (i.e., if lower-class men, women, and children truly prefer a family consisting of a mother, children, and a series of transient males) then it is hardly the federal government's proper business to try to alter this choice. Instead, the government ought to invent ways of providing such families with the same physical and psychic necessities of life available to other kinds of families.

A government determined to guarantee not only the physical but the psychological welfare of a family consisting of an unmarried nineteen-year-old girl

raising three children is going to have to be very inventive indeed. The Jencks formulation reveals an attitude that is at once generously accommodating about *how* people live their lives, and at the same time deeply anxious about the circumstances in which they live. Most remarkably, these divergent concerns are to be reconciled by a benevolent government that is charged with the duty to intercede constantly to make sure that there are never any disagreeable connections between the two—that how people act never has any adverse effects on how they live.

Jencks' approach was given an elaborate theoretical justification a few years later by John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice*. The principles of justice Rawls devised require that any person's "life plan" be accepted as equal in dignity to anyone else's. Even a man who wants to spend his life counting blades of grass is not to be reproached. Instead, the just society will arrange itself to maximize everyone's "primary goods," the basic resources that are conducive to the pursuit of a whole range of life plans. These include not only what Jencks would call the physical necessities, such as wealth, but psychic necessities that, for Rawls, include a sense of one's own worth. The counter of grass blades is not only to be spared any harassment; society must act affirmatively to guarantee that his blade counting does not detract from his material well-being and that he is accorded the encouragement and respect he needs to pursue his life plan. As Allan Bloom says, the government of such a society is *laissez faire* with respect to the ends people pursue, but *beaucoup faire* regarding the means to those ends.

The rise and dogged defense of affirmative action policies displays all the features of the transformed liberal understanding of racial justice: the overriding desire to eliminate every consequence traceable to racial discrimination; the steady trivialization of one of the moral ideals of the civil rights movement, the attainment of a color-blind society; the attempt to declare a controversial topic off-limits, enforced by the ready accusation of racism; and the need for limitless government intervention in the service of operationally hazy and ever-receding goals.

The most remarkable thing about affirmative action is that after twenty years of implementation and debate, it is still impossible to say what it means for an affirmative action program to succeed, or when one has gone too far in discounting the credentials of white school or job applicants. Affirmative action is always defended as a temporary departure from the principle of race-neutrality in the service of the larger goal of racial equity. But the duration and extent of this departure is never firmly fixed. In those places, particularly universities, where affirmative action has been most avidly embraced, the goal of racial equality and harmony is farther away than ever; and the inevitable response to this problem is an even more comprehensive and ambitious departure from the

standard of color-blind policies.

Similarly, defenders of affirmative action assert that reasonableness will limit the discrimination practiced against whites. But there is no basis for this reasonableness in the theory of affirmative action and little evidence of it in the practice. If it is desirable for Harvard Law School to reject every white applicant whose credentials fall within a certain range while accepting every similarly qualified black applicant, why not apply this practice to the *entire* range of applicants, and reject *all* whites for a period of several years? Wouldn't this hasten the indemnification of past injustices, the overriding objective of affirmative action? Wouldn't it constitute a decisive triumph of the moral imperatives of social justice over the allegedly specious claims that meritocratic practices can identify and reward the talented and deserving? Little comfort can be derived from assurances that the proliferation of "Whites Need Not Apply" signs is unthinkable. Many things routinely done today in the name of racial justice would have been unthinkable not long ago. Did the Washington rally that cheered Martin Luther King's dream that his children would be judged by the content of their character and not the color of their skin suspect that enthusiasm for policies judging by skin color would shortly become the litmus test for devotion to the civil rights cause?

The pre-1965 goal of integration, in the words of Joe Klein in *New York* magazine, "seems an impossibly romantic notion now. Even to propose it as the solution to the racial morass raises derisive hoots in the black community and patronizing shrugs and smiles from whites." The case for racial integration incorporated both pragmatic and idealistic elements. The practical argument was that segregation led inevitably to inequality, while integration guaranteed that burdens imposed upon blacks would also afflict whites, and that whites would then find the alleviation of blacks' problems to be important to their own self-interest. The romantic element was the belief that even as segregation reinforced itself by fortifying racial resentment, ignorance, and antagonism, integration would promote racial tolerance and harmony, evolving steadily from a government policy into a natural inclination.

The sudden rise of black particularism, and the equally sudden white acquiescence in it, extinguished the enthusiasm for integration. Black leaders who stressed the importance of blacks' pride in their heritage and culture feared, plausibly, that true integration in a society in which blacks were a small minority would subordinate black distinctiveness. The newly acute awareness of white racism undermined the practical argument for integration as well. White guilt, justly reckoned, should provide ample motivation for whites to fulfill their obligations to blacks; the imperative to redress the legacy of racism was compromised by the reliance on white pursuit of self-

interest in an integrated society. Above all, integration appeals to the same race-neutral principles that black separatism, like affirmative action, cannot abide. No general rule can justify condemning the idea of white student unions while at the same time applauding the creation of black ones. If the desire to associate solely with members of one's own race deserves respect and political protection, then the segregationist argument against the measures pursued by the civil rights movement has been vindicated.

Black criminal behavior is the issue where liberals have failed most spectacularly to fashion a double standard that can simultaneously propitiate their own guilt and satisfy both logic and the limits of the American electorate's tolerance. According to Joe Klein:

When aggrievement was proclaimed the central psychic fact of black life, the most aggrieved and alienated—the most amoral, the criminals—became the definers of "true" blackness in the media and also in the streets. White liberals, guilt-ridden (I write from experience), accepted this spurious definition at face value. Far worse, though: For a brief, truly revolting moment, white radicals celebrated the most antisocial blacks as culture heroes. Criminality was romanticized. . . . There was something incredibly careless—and so ironic as to feed the worst black paranoia—about both the white radicals' celebration of and the liberals' acceptance of this pathological behavior.

Candor, of course, had to be jettisoned as the limits of the discussable were redrawn to exclude black street crime. But the political cost of making excuses for, or discreetly playing down, a shocking increase in crime that terrified and enraged millions of people was enormous. Liberals could neither adhere to this line of argument, nor, having delivered innumerable admonitions about blaming the victim and treating the "root causes" of crime, could they easily repudiate it.

One response to this problem has been to emphasize the indisputable fact that most crimes committed by blacks are committed against blacks. Casting the discussion in these terms allows liberals to deplore black crime with a clear conscience; the focus on black victims establishes a connection between their new stand against crime and the older excoriation of the effects of white racism.

The situation remains awkward, however. To say that black-on-black crime is particularly regrettable implies that black-on-white crime is somehow more tolerable, an implication that is both morally and politically untenable. A brief exchange in a discussion about the future of the Democratic party suggests that liberals' hand-wringing about crime is not likely to end soon. The participants included Rep. Barney

Frank; Roland Burris, the black comptroller of Illinois; Jack Hitt, an editor of *Harper's Magazine*; and Robert Reich, Harvard economist and author of *The Resurgent Liberal*.

Frank: Democrats have to admit a mistake first. We have intimidated ourselves out of saying that people who hit other people over the head—no matter what their childhood was like—are rotten people who ought to be locked up. Poverty and racism may explain, even predict, violent crime, but they do not excuse it.

Burris: Put the criminals in jail.

Hitt: That's what the Republicans say.

Reich: Go beyond that. You could say that the black community is suffering more than the white community.

Frank: Don't say that.

Burris: I can say that.

Frank: You're right. You can.

III

There is no need to recount here the well-documented story of how the civil rights movement inspired political activism by other groups with grievances about their status in America and their treatment throughout American history. Whatever the correct assessment about the severity of these grievances, and the exact role played by the heroic example of the civil rights movement, it must be said that the moral and political advantages of victimhood were too great, and too obvious, for others to refrain indefinitely from laying claim to them. Women, Hispanics, American Indians, Asian-Americans, homosexuals, the disabled—within the decade following 1965, each group boasted a political movement seeking the satisfaction of its demands as a matter of moral recompense.

Despite liberalism's instant and eager embrace of the goals and grievances of all these movements, the politics of victimhood has not flourished by becoming more popular. Some of the problems are clearly caused by this popularity itself. As more and more items are appended, the task of putting forward a perfectly harmonized victims' agenda becomes increasingly difficult. In particular, those who have already established their victimhood are inevitably wary of new groups claiming the status who might thus dilute the political force of their own claims. The inevitable tensions among the various constituencies—between blacks and Hispanics, for example—create conflicts that not only complicate political activism, but threaten to make the overall political effort look like a collection of interest groups seeking advantages, rather than victims insisting on justice.

The more serious problem, however, is in the theory rather than the practice of the politics of victimhood. Its ultimate message is that weakness equals strength;

the more vividly a group can depict its history of subjugation, the stronger its claims to redistributive justice. As it has been absorbed by liberalism, this victimhood argument is meant to put some steel in the liberals' appeal to compassion as a rationale for paying for the welfare state. We feel compassion for the merely unfortunate, but something deeper for those who are outright victims. Our obligation is even more emphatic if we are the victimizers—or the beneficiaries of past or present victimizing carried out by others—rather than just good Samaritans who tend to the afflicted after the crime has been committed and the perpetrators have fled.

The increased urgency we are meant to feel about alleviating the plight of victims is at odds, however, with the effort to get the people who are going to pay for the welfare state to identify with its beneficiaries. The poor are not, as Hopkins and Jackson insisted, people just like the rest of us. They are set apart from us by the depredations they have endured. The people whom liberals want to pay for the welfare state are no longer encouraged to regard the poor as fellow citizens distinguished only by their misfortune, but as the rightful claimants to the wealth and power they deserve to have redistributed from the prosperous to them.

To the extent that this characterization of distributive justice is accepted by those who will pay for the welfare state, the power of the argument is undeniable. But gaining that acceptance is hard. It is not only self-interest but the sense of proportion inseparable from any discussion about justice that stands in the way. The politics of victimhood is meant to establish a connection between the vast injustices of the past and specific remedies to be imposed today. "Why should my taxes be raised, or my son rejected by a medical school that would have accepted him if not for its affirmative action program?" Because of the need to atone for the crimes of the slave traders and the rapacious settlers of the West and undo the consequences of those injustices, the liberal tells the prospective welfare state contributor. "But what does that have to do with me? I didn't commit those acts, I don't approve of them, and I don't discriminate against members of minority groups. Why is it fair to penalize me for the sins of others?"

It is at this point that the idea of collective guilt must be invoked in one way or another. We are implicated in these historical crimes, says the liberal, and deserve to be penalized for them, by virtue of the fact (a) that we are the beneficiaries of social arrangements built on the foundations laid by this past exploitation; and (b) that despite our protests, we continue to treat and regard the historically victimized in discriminatory and injurious ways, sometimes knowingly, sometimes unconsciously.

The problem with this argument is that it proves

too much rather than too little. It proves too much because the enormity and duration of the historical crimes to be redressed make it impossible to define a proportionate penalty, since they make it impossible to ascertain what a disproportionate penalty would be. Can anything short of the legalization of black ownership of white slaves, the departure of all Europeans from the Western hemisphere, and, for good measure, the expulsion of the Normans from England, rebalance the historical equation?

The collective guilt argument is politically ineffective not because it asks a lot, but because it offers no reason to believe that there are limits beyond which it will ask no more. It is one thing to be called upon to go the extra mile, and quite another to be told to step on a treadmill. Unceasing exhortations about the need to redress the massive injustices of the past produce in time not a sense of urgency but a retreat into cynical indifference. If, for example, the definition of a racist becomes so encompassing that anyone with pink skin and a pulse qualifies, it then becomes impossible both to know what it means not to be a racist, and to see why any particular endeavor to mitigate racism is not ultimately futile. People will not stay on a treadmill for long, once they come to understand that it is a treadmill.

If the politics of victimhood founders on the premise that weakness equals strength, it is served no better by the corollary that strength equals weakness. According special political rights to the victimized inevitably engenders new claims of victimization and the need for a criterion for accepting or rejecting those claims. The logic of the politics of victimhood dictates that this criterion will concern the severity of a group's aggrievement. The least of the problems with this arrangement is that debates over whether a particular group has been "sufficiently" persecuted are seldom edifying. More troubling is the capriciousness with which the victimhood threshold is emplaced by self-appointed arbiters whose wisdom and impartiality are not obvious. A University of Washington task force on ethnicity declined to confer ethnic group status on Jews or on Italian- and Irish-Americans, and it excluded anti-Semitism from a required course on racism in America because "anti-Semitism is not institutionalized in this country." The attempt to capitalize on the instinctive empathy decent people feel for genuine victims is not enhanced when those claiming to represent these victims callously dismiss the grievances of other groups because they haven't suffered "enough."

The contention that strength equals weakness further complicates the politics of victimhood by discouraging—or at the very least rendering morally problematic—efforts by members of victimized groups to better their own circumstances. Victims who refuse to act like victims imperil the identity and prerogatives accorded their group by calling into question the

helplessness of the other members. (Black students at inner-city high schools who are conspicuously attentive to their studies have been mocked by their peers for "acting white.") The guardians of a group's victimhood status are apprehensive that every instance of demonstrated self-sufficiency will gratify the skeptics who argue, "You see? They don't need special treatment; they could make it if they tried."

The effectiveness of the politics of victimhood depends on the acceptance of the belief that victims' welfare is decisively dependent on the political rectification of their collective grievances. Advancement through individual efforts by members of a particular group, or by some groups markedly faster than others, calls into question the need for governmental allocation of advantages according to the adjudication of the claims of victimhood. The problem is not just that this individual advancement gives non-victims pause about accepting the argument about the pervasive and crippling effects of victimization. These success stories also show that many victims themselves don't really embrace this view; instead of agitating for—or despairing over—political deliverance from their plight, they set about changing it through individual, nonpolitical striving. It is not only the success of their efforts, but the very fact that some victims did not consider it futile to make them, that places a large question mark behind the assertions of the politics of victimhood.

There is something strange about a political movement that is scandalized by the well-being of its own constituents. And there is something pernicious about the facile equation of poverty with victimization; doing so condescendingly and harmfully excuses the poor from complying with the moral and practical imperatives that govern the lives of everyone else. It simultaneously demeans the poor by telling them that we expect less of them than we do from others, and affronts the millions of Americans who have escaped from poverty through their own efforts, disparaging their success as a sell-out to a morally contemptible system rather than the honorable pursuit of legitimate opportunities.

The liberal instinct is to blame human misery on environmental factors, and tell those affected that they have nothing to be ashamed of. (There are no bad boys, Eleanor Roosevelt said, only bad schools.) But it is impossible to keep the logic from working in both directions: People who have nothing to be ashamed of are left with nothing to be proud of. If living irresponsibly is not really our fault, then a conscientious, disciplined life is not really to our credit. We may explain the former as a result of social conditions rather than individual character and conduct, but we cannot then explain the latter in any other terms.

This attitude forfeits any moral leverage that we might wish to exert on people living in poverty, especially young people. It's pointless to exhort people

to be luckier, and better luck is the most benign characterization of how liberalism explains the distinction between prosperity and poverty. The least benign characterization alleges that the prosperous are prosperous because of their greed, their callousness, and their connivance in the victimization of the poor. Not only is it impossible to urge the poor to emulate the middle class, it is undesirable. If anything, social justice requires the middle class to emulate the poor, to be less driven, less eager to take advantage of opportunities that ultimately require taking advantage of others.

The voracious reductionism that undergirds the politics of victimhood can vindicate neither the honor of the poor nor the government's redress of their grievances through the endless rearrangement of social advantages and conditions. The exact assessment of the relative importance of luck and pluck in determining how our lives unfold will always elude us. But the harshness we risk by overestimating the role of individual effort can be more easily tolerated and remedied than the paralysis created by exaggerating the power of social circumstance. If the effects of our environment are truly pervasive, then not only do the poor have a solid excuse for spurning a life of exertion and deferred gratification, but the prosperous are entitled to rationalize indifference to the poor as a result of *their* social conditioning rather than any moral failings.

No political arrangement can be truly cohesive among people who deny responsibility for their own beliefs and actions. But liberal democracy's susceptibility to this determinism is especially acute. Resigned passivity may be appropriate, even necessary, for the many in a regime consisting of rulers and subjects. A republic of citizens, however, all of whom bear the responsibilities of both rulers and subjects, cannot govern itself unless these citizens believe in the potency of their own decisions.

In its embrace of the politics of victimhood liberalism does a disservice both to the interests of the poor

and the preservation of democracy. Neither is served by the division of Americans into two classes, victims and victimizers, those with negligible and those with infinite social obligations. There is no basis in logic or experience for believing that the journey to reverse the effects of history's iniquities takes place on any terrain except a very slippery slope. No discernible foothold can avert the descent of the whole endeavor into endless and bitter feuding over how to allocate every type of advantage and burden.

Liberals are right when they insist that regarding the poor as the equals of all other citizens is essential to the incorporation of a viable welfare state within a robust democracy. But equal rights are inseparable from equal responsibilities, including the responsibility for one's own actions and the life determined by them. The goal of a truly humane social policy will be to provide the poor with opportunities for escaping poverty, not excuses for remaining impoverished. The perpetuation of self-government requires that we halt all discriminatory practices left over from harsher times. But American democracy will be crushed by the burden of reconstructing itself to cancel every effect of history's sins.

Common sense must impose a statute of limitations on collective guilt. It is imperative not because America's conscience needs to be salved, but because American democracy cannot reckon and honor claims of the past on the future that are infinite in their duration and scope. To construct a nation that irrevocably rejects the long, sad history of human exploitation would be a great triumph. To construct one that wipes away every consequence of this history would be a miracle requiring prodigies of wisdom, virtue, and steadfastness. Such miracles may define our hopes, but they should not be the premise of our policy agendas. To summon the strength we need for effecting the progress that really is within our power, we must let the past be the past. If liberalism is serious about helping the poor, it must jettison the dead-end politics of victimhood. 

When Jews Are Christians

David Novak

I

By now it is obvious that in the past twenty-five years or so there has been considerable progress in the Jewish-Christian relationship. Overcoming centuries of mutual hostility or indifference, some Jews and Christians are now able to engage in honest and fruitful dialogue and, as religious communities struggling in a larger secular society and culture, they are now able to recognize a number of overlapping interests. For Christians, this progress has required overcoming triumphalist attempts to delegitimize postbiblical Judaism. For Jews, this progress has required overcoming the assumption that Christianity is incorrigibly anti-Jewish and that all Christians are ultimately, if not immediately, anti-Semites. Progress has grown out of a healthy balance between otherness and commonality. Some Jews and Christians are now able to recognize the otherness of the other community as something to be respected rather than feared. And they are now able to recognize enough commonality in terms of common past origins, common present concerns, and common hopes for the future to enable a genuinely mutual relationship to take root and grow.

II

Despite this progress, a problem lies just beneath the surface. It is a problem that must be discussed if the progress we have experienced in the Jewish-Christian relationship is not to regress. The problem concerns a new type of Jewish convert to Christianity, who has of late become more visible and more vocal.

It has always been inevitable that, living as a small minority among a Christian majority, some Jews

would convert to Christianity. At certain times of great persecution, like the Inquisition, some feigned conversion, becoming "secret Jews" (e.g., the so-called "Maranos"). Faced with the alternative of death or exile, they would adopt some kind of pseudo-Christianity, which might be abandoned at the first opportunity. By a grisly irony, the Inquisition correctly assumed that such Jewish converts were not really Christians and never had been. Other Jews converted to Christianity and remained in the Church because they saw it as socially or economically advantageous. Finally, still others converted to Christianity because they sincerely believed that Christianity is the true faith. Although by Christian standards Jews who convert to Christianity for opportunistic reasons are clearly "bad" Christians, and Jews who convert to Christianity for religious reasons are clearly "good" Christians, the one thing they had in common was that they both believed themselves to be Christians and no longer Jews. Both kinds of converts believed that they had made a decisive leap from one community to another.

As far as Christianity was concerned, they had, like any other converts, indeed become members of the Church. Following Paul's assertion that "there is no such thing as Jew and Greek . . . in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28), the Church refused to recognize any special status for Christians of Jewish origin in its ranks. For their part, the Jewish authorities considered converts to Christianity to be apostates (*meshumadim*) whose return to Judaism was a hope never to be abandoned, however unlikely that return might in fact be. And the Jewish converts to Christianity themselves almost always accepted the Church's definition of their new status. They no longer regarded themselves as Jews and were often quite vehement in repudiating their former identity.

Now, however, there is a new kind of Jewish Christian, one who poses an altogether new problem for both the Jewish and the Christian communities. These

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Jewish converts to Christianity not only claim still to be Jews, they also claim still to be practicing Judaism. Some of them insist that they are indeed practicing *the* true Judaism, implying that all other Jews are practicing a false Judaism. Others merely insist that they are practicing *a* true Judaism, thus implying if not actually demanding that their practice be accepted as a legitimate form of Judaism. The vast majority of Jews refuse to accept either what might be termed the maximalist claim or even the minimalist claim of the Jewish Christians.

In relation to the Christians, the new Jewish Christians claim a special role for themselves within the Church, offering themselves as a kind of personal link between the now gentile Church and its Jewish origins. This claim often includes a demand for recognition of their right, or even obligation, to perform the ritual commandments of the Torah, from which all other Christians have been exempted by Christ (see Matthew 12:8). Some of them go so far as to refuse the name "Christian" altogether, preferring to call themselves "Messianic Jews." For even though the Greek *Christos* is no more than a translation of the Hebrew *Mashiah*, the connotation of the word has come during the course of history to mean something quite different.

The various branches of the Church have reacted variously to this new type of Jewish Christian. Yet it would seem that any formal conferral of a unique status upon them would mark the acceptance of a permanent division of Christians *de jure* into a Jewish and a gentile branch. This would, theologically speaking, pose a far greater threat to Christian ecumenism than the present *de facto* divisions within the Church—divisions, after all, that can be seen as merely temporary obstacles for Christians to overcome.

Beyond posing a special kind of problem both to the Jewish community and the Christian community, these Jewish Christians also constitute a problem to the new Jewish-Christian relationship. For the acceptance of their unique status by some Christians strongly suggests to many Jews—very much including those most favorably disposed to the new Jewish-Christian relationship—that the Jewish Christians are being held up to the rest of the Jews as exemplars. In other words, Christian recognition of their unique status strongly suggests a new form of proselytizing, specifically directed at Jews, that is quite different from a general Christian proclamation of the Gospel to the entire world. Inasmuch as the Gospel is in essence similar to the Jewish proclamation that "it shall come to pass in the end of days . . . from Zion shall the Torah go forth and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Micah 4:1-2), most Jews can live with it. But proselytizing efforts that are specifically directed at Jews must be abandoned by Christians who wish to engage in any dialogical relationship with Jews. For we Jews cannot be expected to allow ourselves

to be the objects of efforts designed specifically to lure us eventually, if not immediately, away from what we believe is our own true covenantal identity. In fact, those of us in the Jewish community who favor dialogue and cooperation with Christians have had to contend against certain of our fellow Jews who see the new Jewish-Christian relationship as a clever ruse designed by sophisticated Christians to take in gullible Jews. Thus Christian acceptance of the self-proclaimed Judaism of the new Jewish Christians, as opposed to accepting them simply as *any* converts are accepted, can only undermine the position of the pro-dialogue and cooperation party within the Jewish community.

Jewish rejection of the claim of the Jewish Christians that they remain part of the life and faith of the people of Israel has taken legal form in several important decisions of the State of Israel's Supreme Court. The most recent decision of the Court on that issue, in 1989, involved two Jewish Christians, Jerry and Shirley Beresford, who petitioned for Israeli citizenship as Jews under the Law of Return, which guarantees immediate Israeli citizenship to every Jew. The Court rejected their petition on the grounds that the Law of Return specifically precludes from the right it confers any Jew who has affiliated with another, non-Jewish, religious community. In this decision, the Court essentially followed the precedent of the 1962 rejection of a similar petition by Oswald Rufeisen, a Jew who had become a Roman Catholic monk under the name of Brother Daniel. (The only basic difference between these two cases is that Rufeisen was clearly a member of a discernible non-Jewish community, the Roman Catholic Church, whereas it was somewhat unclear just what Christian community the Beresfords are members of.)

The Court's rejection of this petition, which is wholly consistent with the attitude of virtually all of world Jewry, has angered a number of Christians, even some who are otherwise favorably disposed to the new Jewish-Christian relationship. For does it not seem to single out Jewish Christians for rejection? Why, some of them have asked me and other Jewish friends, are Jewish Christians any less Jewish than Jewish atheists? These questions are quite understandable, and they must be addressed by thoughtful Jews, especially Jewish theologians who have been able to communicate with Christians theologically.

III

Being, on the whole, biblical literalists, the Jewish Christians assume that they can simply pick up where the Jewish Christians in the earliest Church left off. The Jewish Christians, especially when they designate themselves as "messianic," assume that they are that branch of the Jewish people who have accepted Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. In their opinion, it is merely that the rest of the Jewish people have not yet done so. Thus they see the messiahhood of

Jesus as the sole point of difference between themselves and their fellow Jews. Like most biblical literalists, they choose to ignore the testimony of intervening history. But that intervening history also counts as an indispensable factor for the normative judgments of both Judaism and Christianity.

And it is intervening history that has made any simple division between messianic and non-messianic Jews inappropriate. The question of which Jews accept Jesus as the Messiah and which do not is no longer applicable. The fact is that neither Jews nor gentiles relate to Jesus as the Messiah now. Messiahhood is a political designation for a divinely restored (or, at least, divinely sanctioned) Jewish king in Jerusalem, who will gather in the exiles, establish a state governed by the Torah, and rebuild the Temple. For Christians, Jesus is different from, and a good deal more than, that; he is also believed to be divine. He is mainly acknowledged as the incarnate Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. His messiahhood, for Christians, has now been postponed to the Second Coming, when Christians believe he will rule on earth as Christ the King (see John 18:36). In Jewish belief, on the other hand, Jesus was not the Messiah precisely because he did not bring about the full restoration of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel and God's universal reign of peace.

The real issue that now separates Jews and Christians is not messiahhood but the incarnation and the Trinity. Unlike the issue of messiahhood, which arose when Jews and Christians were members of the same religio-political community and spoke the same conceptual language, the issues of the incarnation and the Trinity divide people who are no longer members of the same community and who no longer speak the same language. There is no longer any common criterion of truth available for debating, much less resolving, the fundamental differences between Judaism and Christianity.

Once the Church decided that gentile converts no longer had to undergo halakhic conversion to Judaism first (see Acts 15:8-11), it was inevitable that Jews and Christians would separate into two distinct communities. Eventually the Church condemned as "judaizing" any suggestion that Christians could practice Jewish rites in good faith, and contemporary Jewish authorities were equally disapproving of this type of syncretism. Although Christians, in their rejection of the Marcionite heresy (which attempted to sever Christianity from its roots in Judaism), still consider themselves part of the Jewish story (*aggadah*), they do not consider themselves to be subject to Jewish law (*halakhah*). In place of the Jewish commandments (*mitzvot*) came the sacraments, which are like the Jewish commandments in that they are structured by their own law (what became the Canon law of the Church). This legal separation enabled the Church to evolve from a Jewish sect into a fully independent religious community. Gradually, many Jewish

authorities came to look upon the now independent Christian Church as an essentially gentile community, but one uniquely related to Judaism because of its acceptance of Jewish Scripture as authoritative in some basic matters of faith and morals.

Today's Jewish Christians, then, are not a simple throwback to the first Jewish Christians. They can, rather, be more closely compared to the Jewish Christian syncretists of the second and third centuries. But neither normative Judaism nor normative Christianity has been willing to tolerate such syncretism. Both communities have seen it as a type of error that is inconsistent with the independence of each of them.

IV

The important thing to remember when dealing with the issue of the Jewish Christians is that according to normative Judaism, they are still Jews. Jewish status is defined by the divine election of Israel and his descendants. One does not become a Jew by one's own volition. Even in the case of converts to Judaism (whose number is increasing today), they are not "Jews by choice," as some would erroneously call them. A gentile's choice to become a Jew is a necessary but not sufficient condition of conversion. No conversion is valid without the express consent of the convert, to be sure, but the convert's choice is not sufficient to make him or her a Jew: it only makes one a *candidate* for conversion. The actual conversion itself is the act of an authoritative Jewish Tribunal who, in effect, *elect* the candidate before them, as God elects Israel and his descendants. Like God, the tribunal is under no compulsion to elect, which is to say convert, anyone.

Since Jews are elected by God, there is absolutely nothing any Jew can do to remove himself or herself from the Covenant. The rule concerning individual apostates is based on a Talmudic judgment about the Jewish people as a whole: "Even when it has sinned, Israel is still Israel" (Sanhedrin 44a). No one who accepts the authority of normative Judaism can rule that Jewish Christians are not Jews. What they can and do rule, however, is that the Christhood (incarnation/trinitarian status) of Jesus of Nazareth is not an option within God's everlasting Covenant with the people of Israel. Jewish Christians are still Jews, but they are no longer practicing a religion Jews regard as part of Judaism.

Why is Christianity not a legitimate covenantal option for Jews? There are two ways to answer the question.

One way might be termed exegetical. This had a complex development in ancient and medieval times, and it frequently reappears in modern times in encounters between Jewish fundamentalists and their Christian counterparts. Here Jews invoke Jewish Scripture because it is accepted as authoritative by Christians too as their "Old Testament." Through

exegesis of commonly acknowledged Scripture, Jews have tried to show that the messiahhood of Jesus is invalid according to scriptural criteria, and that the Christian doctrines of the incarnation and the Trinity have no true foundation in Scripture at all. Of course, through their own exegesis, Christians have tried to show that the contrary position is validated by Scripture. Frequently, the most intense exegetical disputations between Jews and Christians have involved the very same scriptural passages. Just think of how much ink has been spilled over the issue whether Isaiah 7:14 should be interpreted "behold the young woman (*ha'almah*) shall conceive and bear a son" (the Jewish version), or "behold the virgin (*hē parthenos*) shall conceive and bear a son" (the Christian version). Nevertheless, one can conclude from studying the long history of these Jewish-Christian exegetical disputations that they have largely been exercises in futility, convincing only the already convinced.

The reason for the inconclusiveness of this exegetical method of argumentation is not difficult to find. Modern Jewish and Christian scholars have alike come to the understanding that scriptural exegesis is much more a process whereby the teachings of the tradition of a religious community (what Jews call *Oral Torah* and Catholics call the *magisterium*) are connected to Scripture than it is one in which these teachings are simply derived from Scripture in some unproblematic fashion. Thus it is that Jews and Christians can read a common text so differently and therefore cannot resolve their differences by appealing to the authority of Scripture. The commonality between Judaism and Christianity can be affirmed and developed only in those areas where our respective traditions do indeed overlap. But on the whole question of who Jesus is, they do not overlap. All our divergences pale in comparison to this one fundamental difference. Many Jews—I among them—and many Christians now believe that this fundamental difference will remain until God's final redemption of the world at the end of history.

Since Jews and Christians are still *within* history rather than at its end, the best approach to the question as to why Christianity is not a legitimate covenantal option for Jews is historical rather than exegetical.

From the fact that the first generation of Christians were mostly Jewish ("according to the flesh," as Paul put it in Romans 4:1), one could argue that Christianity was *at that time* a form of Judaism, perhaps even a heterodox form of pharisaic Judaism. (There is a voluminous scholarly literature on this subject by both Christian and Jewish scholars.) However, it is clear from the historical record that in the succeeding generations, the Church became a predominantly gentile community. This was because gentile converts to Christianity were no longer required to convert to Judaism by following the halakhic prescriptions of circumcision and acceptance of all the commandments

of the Torah and Jewish tradition. (The halakhic requirement of immersion was adapted by the Church into the requirement of baptism.) The descendants of the original Jewish Christians quickly became gentiles themselves through intermarriage with gentile Christians in the Church.

Had the Church decided otherwise, that is, had it chosen what might be called the "halakhic" Christianity of the "pharisaic Christians" mentioned in Acts 15:5, it is conceivable that the whole Jewish-Christian relationship might well have developed altogether differently than it did. However, history cannot be erased (not, at least, by human creatures). The choice of the Church has been to be a gentile community according to the flesh—even though it sincerely claims to be grafted onto Israel according to the spirit (Romans 11:21), a point with which many Jews could basically agree. This historical choice led Jews subsequently to identify the different doctrines and practices of this now gentile community as doctrines and practices prohibited to Jews.

V

The refusal of the Supreme Court of the State of Israel in 1989 to grant Jerry and Shirley Beresford Israeli citizenship *as Jews*, and its insistence that they could become Israeli citizens only *as Christians* (who are eligible for Israeli citizenship, too), is the decision of a secular court in a secular state. Nevertheless, there were two opinions in the case. In practice, both opinions ruled against the petition of the Beresfords as the Court had ruled against the petition of Brother Daniel in 1962. But in theory, the two opinions are quite distinct. This distinction has important theological implications.

The minority opinion based its conclusion on what might be called "ordinary language" criteria, that is, the theory that says that the meaning of terms is determined by the way they are currently used in ordinary conversation, not by the way they are defined in learned texts. By this criterion, the minority opinion based itself on the fact that in ordinary language Jews and Christians are considered to be two separate groups, that one cannot simultaneously be a member of both communities. If one were to ask the proverbial "man in the street" if a Christian could also be a Jew, or a Jew also a Christian, the answer would surely be a simple "no."

The Court's majority opinion, on the other hand, did base itself on Jewish tradition, "following the language of the Torah, not the ordinary language of humans," as the Talmud puts it. The exclusion of the Beresfords from Jewish status in the State of Israel is based on the traditional power of the authorities of the Jewish community to exclude those considered apostates from many of the privileges of the community. Thus, for example, apostates are to be excluded from the privilege of being called to the reading of

the Torah in the synagogue, or even to be counted in the quorum of ten (*minyan*) required for a full synagogue service to be conducted. The apostate is still a Jew; no human court can change that fact. But the apostate is excluded from communion with the normative Jewish community (*knesset yisrael*).

I purposely use the term “communion” because Christians, especially Catholic Christians, can recognize the same process in “excommunication.” Since Catholics regard baptism to be indelible, no one is ever totally removed from the body of the Church. Excommunication means that because of serious mortal sin—such as apostasy—someone is not allowed the privilege of receiving communion, that is, participating in the eucharist. Proper repentance can lead to the removal of the ban of excommunication. No doubt a Catholic who converted to Judaism would be subject to such excommunication. This does not mean that the Church is denying its roots in Judaism. It simply means that it does not regard Judaism to be a legitimate type of Christianity, a point with which very few Jews would disagree. Similarly, by regarding the Jewish convert to Christianity as an apostate Judaism is not denying that Christianity is uniquely connected to it. It simply is saying that it does not regard Christianity as a legitimate type of Judaism, but rather regards it as an independent religious community in its own right, a point with which very few Christians would disagree.

The question of why Jewish authorities are harder on Jewish Christians than on Jewish atheists is one that Jewish theologians must answer. Christian anger about what might appear to be a double standard would otherwise be entirely understandable.

In a purely religious context, such as a synagogue service, for example, a professed Jewish atheist has no more right to be a participant than a professed Christian. By “participant” I mean one capable of being counted in the quorum of ten and being called to the reading of the Torah. Anyone, of course, may attend a synagogue service. Similarly, anyone may attend a church service, but not everyone may receive communion. Practically speaking, there is little likelihood that a professed Jewish atheist of any moral integrity would want to participate in a *religious* service. Until quite recently, there was equally little likelihood that a professed Christian, of whatever origins, would want to participate in a *Jewish* religious service. At present, however, there are certain Jewish Christians who regard themselves as Jews—even religious Jews—who do want to participate in Jewish religious services. Whereas Jewish atheists do not regard their atheism as a Jewish *religious* option, some Jewish Christians do regard their Christianity as such an option. Since there is a greater possibility for confusion regarding Jewish Christians than Jewish

atheists, Jewish authorities have to be harder on Jewish Christians. Considering the claim of many Christians throughout history to be the “true Israel” (*verus Israel*)—a claim made by no other religious community—strong Jewish reaction to Jewish Christians who seem to be repeating that claim, one so offensive to Jews, should come as no real surprise.

Another reason why Jewish Christians are to be treated more severely than Jewish atheists is that, despite all their protestations to the contrary, Jewish Christians have joined *another*, non-Jewish, community, and Jewish atheists have not. (A distinction has to be made here between doctrinaire Jewish atheists and the many secularized Jews who may not act on, but nevertheless have not explicitly renounced, Jewish religious belief and practice.) This basic point was an integral part of the Israeli Supreme Court’s decision to deny the Beresfords citizenship as Jews. Here again, historical experience as much as theological-legal definition played a key role. For non-fundamentalists, moreover, history and theology and law are integrally related.

VI

Jewish Christians, then, pose unique problems of one kind for Judaism and unique problems of another for the Church. In addition, they pose problems for the cause of a new, improved Jewish-Christian relationship. I am not asking Christians to reject them, or even to question the sincerity of their belief that their form of Jewish Christianity is not a figment of their imaginations. (For this reason, I did not see it to be my business as a Jew to join some other Jews who protested Pope John Paul II’s beatification of the Jewish Christian Edith Stein. When the Church accepted Edith Stein as a convert, she became a member of its religious community. I mourn her death along with the deaths of all the victims of Nazi idolatry, Jewish or gentile.) But as one who has worked long and hard for the progress of this new, improved relationship—especially on the theological level—I do ask Christians to regard the Jewish Christians who claim to be practicing Judaism as an exception rather than the rule. To see them as a unique link between the Jewish people and the Church, and to expect faithful Jews to concur in that judgment, asks too much of us.

In our open society, there are going to be Jews who become Christians for religious reasons just as there are going to be Christians who become Jews for religious reasons. But these great existential decisions are not meant to be cost-free. In any religious conversion, something is gained and something lost (see Yevamot 47a-b; Matthew 10:34-39). I believe at the end of time God will show each one of us whether the gain or the loss is greater in the ways we chose to listen to His voice. ☐

The Present and Future Church

Wolfhart Pannenberg

At the dawning of this century, Christians in Europe and North America harbored great expectations. Many leaders confidently looked forward to completing a mission that was nothing less than the Christianization of the world. For us at the end of the century it is easy, it is all too easy, to dismiss such expectations as "triumphalism." Those who succumb to that temptation often seem to be dismissing the Christian missionary mandate itself. Was, for example, the Apostle Paul guilty of triumphalism?

And yet it does seem obvious that the great expectations of that earlier time have been disappointed. Christians underestimated the forces of secularism, especially of secular nationalism, that would soon throw Europe into the abyss of World War I, destroying Europe's dominant position in world history. The thoroughly secularist nature of the European powers became increasingly evident in many ways. Consider, for one neglected instance, their betrayal of their promises to the Christian people of Greece. The Europeans had promised to restore Greek political control over their ancient settlements in Asia Minor. But, beginning after World War I and continuing to the present time (as evident in the unhappy plight of Cyprus), it became clear that the power politics of the West was now indifferent to the situation of Christianity in the world. Eastern Christians thought the Christian factor would somehow count with a putatively Christian West. They were bitterly disillusioned, and remain so to this day.

The alienation of the Western powers from their cultural and religious roots, and from their consequent sense of historical mission, also played a part in the decolonization movement following World War II. In the post-colonial period, Christian churches in the Third World have demonstrated considerable mission-

ary vitality, especially in Africa and some parts of East Asia. At the same time, however, we have witnessed a remarkable resurgence of other religions, notably of those we call "world religions." Most particularly, Islamic missions have become a formidable challenge to Christianity. This new situation could hardly have been anticipated by Christians who looked forward to this century with such great expectations.

In Europe itself, the forces of secularization, allied with economic affluence, have made dramatic progress in alienating the popular mind from the Christian origins of Western culture. Where once the Christian churches exerted cultural sway, they have become a besieged minority. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that the churches themselves have in many ways bought into a secular mindset. In preaching, teaching, congregational life, and sometimes in liturgy, they have pursued a course of accommodation to secularism. In this way they hope to get a more sympathetic hearing for the Christian message. It is now apparent, however, that the strategy of accommodation is self-defeating.

Accommodation to secularity is in fact perceived as a sign of weakness, as a loss of Christian confidence. It has frequently been noted that the mainline and accommodating churches are in decline, while conservative churches continue to grow. Evangelicals and fundamentalists are not embarrassed to challenge the prevailing patterns of thought and behavior associated with secularity. This growth, however, does not come without paying a price. That price includes a loss of openness to the human situation in all of its maddening variety, and a quenching of the unprejudiced search for truth. That said, the irony is that those churches that are dismissed as irrelevant by more "sophisticated" Christians often turn out to be most relevant to our secular societies. These societies are marked by a pervasive consciousness of dissatisfaction and indeterminate longings, and that is the consciousness most effectively addressed by Christians who have

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a distinctive message that challenges the spirit of secularism.

Secularism can be challenged by irrational protest or reaction. Such reaction, however, is too often accompanied by a closing of the mind to legitimate questions raised to Christian faith, and by an unwillingness to examine honestly the beliefs that Christians want to defend. The more promising response to secularism takes the form of an open and rational (although not "rationalistic") inquiry into both the roots of modernity and the content of the Christian tradition, including the biblical writings. A rational attitude necessarily involves critical reflection, but if such reflection is truly critical it applies itself not only to the cultural tradition but also, and with equal rigor, to the critics of the tradition.

A critical assessment of the biblical tradition and the history of Christian doctrine need not be carried out under the sway of secular modernism. Rather, such an assessment ought to be undertaken for the sake of the Christian message itself. Indeed, that message makes such a critical assessment both necessary and possible, for it includes an understanding of the unity of faith and reason. The alliance between faith and reason has been a mark of the Christian tradition since the second century, if not earlier. Because there is only one God, the creator of all, who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, there can be only one truth for all human beings. The idea of "universal reason," therefore, should not be seen as an invention of modernity. It has its roots in the Christian doctrine of God, and was the motor force of early Christianity's understanding of its universal mission. The confidence that every particular truth must finally be consonant with the one God and his self-revelation continues to be the condition that makes possible the formative and transformative power of the Christian faith in the life of persons, societies, and cultures.

If that power has seemed to be on the wane in recent history, it is due in large part to the widespread assumption that reason and faith belong to different realms, or represent different, even conflicting, dimensions of human experience. Modernity struggled for the emancipation of reason from faith, and many theologians of the modern era found it convenient to accept the separation of the two. What became a breach, both wide and deep, between reason and faith cannot be blamed simply on modernizing theologians and subjectivizing pietists, however. That breach began with the breakup of the Western church in the sixteenth century as a result of the failure of the Reformation movement.

The virulent conflicts between confessional churches and their theologies undermined confidence in the unity of faith and reason. Rational truth can only be one, but Christianity presented itself to the emerging modern world in a divided state of conflicting truth claims. By the time the churches ran out

of zeal for battling one another, many thoughtful people had arrived at the conclusion that the one truth was not to be found in any of the contending confessional parties. The history of Christian division and confessional warfare helped give rise to a secular culture that was determined to free itself from religion altogether. The former alliance between faith and reason was dissolved as more and more people began to assume that faith is "religious" while reason is "secular." As a consequence of these several break ups, Christian faith largely lost its power to transform personal, social, and cultural life.

Those who would adapt the content of Christianity to secular standards may think that they are restoring the lost consonance between faith and reason. Such adaptation is a pathetic and dangerous substitute for that consonance, however, because it is a one-way process. The secular culture is allowed to do all the transforming. An authentic alliance between faith and reason, on the other hand, holds the promise of producing real alternatives to the secular interpretation of reality, while also respecting what is true in the experience of secularity. But Christianity cannot regain its transforming power without a restored confidence in the singularity of the message that distinguishes it from other interpretations of reality. The churches must recognize that as their first and most important task.

According to Christianity, the message of the Kingdom of God is the indispensable condition for meaningful human life, individual and social. The kingdom of God is not something that we can bring about, nor is it identical with the life of the church. It is, rather, the horizon and criterion of individual and social life, including the life of the church. The church's mission is to be a sign of the kingdom. The kingdom itself is the content of the eschatological hope for the transformation of our mortal lives through participation in God's eternal glory by the power of his Spirit in the resurrection of the dead. The advance pledge of this hope is the crucified and risen Christ. Now in an anticipatory manner, and one day fully, we overcome the limits of our present and provisional existence by participating in the new life that entered the world in the resurrection of Jesus.

In its Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), the Second Vatican Council described the church as a sign and instrument of that eschatological hope. (The description of the church as sign of the kingdom, although not as instrument, was adopted by the World Council of Churches in 1968.) According to Vatican II, the church signifies the promise of unity with God and communion among human beings. Unity with God has first place in our human destiny, and flowing from it is communion with one another. In the years since the Council, that order has often been reversed. It is suggested that human community is the ultimate goal, and it really does not matter what

the basis of such unity might be. In this "secular ecumenism" the church is viewed as an agent of political and social transformation resulting in the unity of humankind. Only by maintaining, with Vatican II, the priority of communion with God, however, can the Christian hope comprehend the inevitable unsatisfactoriness of all social and political arrangements. That priority also distinguishes the church from every other form of human community. The church is the communion of those who share faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and are joined in him through baptism and eucharist.

What the church does most distinctively serves the world most powerfully. It is precisely as a liturgical worshipping community that the church is most effectively a sign of the ultimate destiny of every human being and of humanity as a whole. That ultimate destiny of all human beings is to be one with God and, through that unity, one with one another. Human beings can associate in many ways in order to achieve a measure of community, even of communion. A gang of criminals is undoubtedly a community of sorts. But the kingdom of God is not community-in-general. It is communion with God through Christ in the power of the Spirit. That communion is the destiny of humankind, and the church, especially in her liturgical life, is the present image of that destiny. Thus the life of the church is itself an integral part of the message of the church, namely, the proposal to the world of its future in the kingdom of God.

The existing churches live up to their nature and mission to the extent that their life reflects the paradigm of the liturgical event: that is to say, to the extent that they give evidence of the unity of Christians based on their unity with God in one faith, one baptism, one eucharist. If the regional and worldwide associations of Christians were structured according to that paradigm, they would exist as communions of communions, communions of local congregations gathered around the celebration of the liturgy. To a degree, the churches today do manifest that basic structure, but only to a degree. They are more often perceived as regional or worldwide institutions much like other social institutions, with bureaucratic structures and disciplines of their own. Moreover, the separate existence of churches on various levels presents the picture of a multiplicity of religious parties in competition, and frequently in conflict, with one another.

Roman Catholic and Orthodox theologians have in recent years taken the lead in developing a "communio" ecclesiology or doctrine of the church. Such an ecclesiology holds great ecumenical promise. Communio ecclesiology is responsive to the Protestant emphasis upon the local congregation where the pure gospel is preached and the sacraments are rightly administered (Augsburg Confession, 1530). At least in principle, communio ecclesiology offers a common

basis for ecumenical thinking about the church, but a number of problems remain. Two are deserving of particular mention.

First, the churches do not all mean the same thing when they refer to "the local church" as the basic unit of ecclesial life. The local church may mean the worshipping congregation in a particular place, in which case the universal church would consist in a communion of local congregations. In Roman Catholic usage, however, "local church" means the diocese or episcopal see. In the early church a diocese was a small geographical unit centered in a place of worship, whereas today a diocese is more like a regional organization of local congregations. Diocesan organizations find their unity in having one bishop rather than one gathering for worship. In this view of the local church, the bishop is understood to preside at the common eucharist, although in fact it is usually a priest and not the bishop who is presiding in a particular congregation or parish. This practice raises the question of how the ministries of priest (or presbyter) and bishop are related, a question of great ecumenical moment. If the episcopal dignity is derived from presiding at the eucharist, it would clarify the "communio" structure of the church to underscore the episcopal nature of the ministry of the presbyter wherever the bishop is not actually present. On the other hand, if episcopal ministry is defined in terms of supervision of local churches, it must have its criterion in the eucharistic unity celebrated in each place.

The first problem, then, is to clarify what is meant by "the local church." The second and closely connected problem has to do with hierarchical authority in the church's life. It is obvious that there must be some kind of supervision, both within and between congregations, to maintain unity in the one faith. Such supervision was exercised by the apostles, and from that there emerged hierarchical forms of ministry—first among the itinerant prophets of early Christianity, then in the form of episcopacy as an office of regional authority, and later in more embracing offices such as those of metropolitans and patriarchs. Hierarchical forms of ministry are intended not only to provide supervision, however. The hierarchical minister fulfills also a representative function—representing the unity of apostolic faith to the people of his church and, at the same time, representing his people to the other churches. Unfortunately, things have not always worked out that way.

The history of hierarchical office has been marked by a tendency toward forms of supervision that are not consonant with the nature of the church. Jesus said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant . . . just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve

and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Matt. 20:25f.) It is no secret that in the history of the church the behavior of its hierarchs has not always been distinguishable from that of the gentiles. Everyone who has authority has to be keenly aware of the temptation to exercise power in order to mold the church according to his (or her) own ideas. Resisting that temptation requires more than simply calling oneself a servant.

In Christian history, the most effective remedy against the abuse of authority has been the development of conciliar structures at the several levels of the church’s life. The remedy does not work perfectly, but it is the only one we have; and if ministry is to be truly representative, it will be ever necessary to emphasize the accountability of hierarchical authorities to conciliar institutions. Again, this is a two-way representation. A minister represents the members of a local, regional, or even worldwide church, but he also faces the other way, representing to those members the apostolic gospel and thus the authority of Jesus Christ himself. In actual practice, these two directions of representation are not always, so to speak, in synch—and this has posed the most difficult problems when it comes to the exercise of authority in the church. The minister cannot be content simply to represent the mind of his constituency, for their opinions and moods must sometimes be opposed for the sake of the gospel. In such cases, however, the minister should not enforce his judgment upon the members, even if he can do so. His role is simply to give testimony to the word of God as he discerns it. His ministry is not to impose but to propose and persuade.

One of the purposes of representative institutions in the church is to teach authoritatively. This is the task of both hierarchical ministry and conciliar bodies. Authoritative teaching represents, first of all, the authority of Christ, but also the communion of the church on its many levels from local assembly to universal fellowship. Except on the local level, such teaching authority is little developed in Protestantism. During the Reformation era efforts were made in that direction, but most Protestant churches did not succeed in developing the procedures and institutions necessary to securing within their confessional families the continuity of representative teaching. As a result some churches, notably the Lutheran churches, became quite traditionalist. They elevated the authority of their sixteenth-century confessional writings, and these writings became a wan substitute for living offices and procedures of teaching authority. They cannot, in a manner representative of their confessional family, respond authoritatively to changed circumstances and fresh scriptural insights.

The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, was considerably more successful in devising ways to continue the exercise of authoritative teaching, but not without paying the price of excessive rigidity. If authoritative teaching is representative teaching, it

must actually be *received* as authoritative and representative in the Christian community. It is not enough simply to claim that such teaching is representative. The community of Christians addressed by their teachers will either receive or not receive the teaching in light of their faith in Jesus Christ and of the scriptural witness to God’s revelation in Christ. In the process of reception it becomes apparent whether or not the teaching was representative.

Moreover, the form of such teaching is always related to, and limited by, historical conditions of language and patterns of thought. A teaching may be representative of the church at a particular time, but perhaps not of the entire church or not in a way that retains its importance in later periods of the church’s history. A teaching may not be expressed in the final form appropriate to the truth that it intends. Such a teaching will be authoritative to the degree that it actually turns out to be representative, both of the Christian community and of the word of God. It is never exempt from critical examination by comparison with the gospel as witnessed in the apostolic writings. It need not fear critical examination, as though it would thereby lose its authority. Any teaching that reflects a high level of representation in the ecclesial community possesses authority. The critical examination we have in mind presupposes that the teaching has authority and is to be taken very seriously indeed.

The purpose of authoritative teaching is to witness to the content of the revelation of God in Christ. Its purpose, therefore, can only be served by intense examination and discussion in the light of the Scriptures, even if it turns out that the form of the teaching must be modified as a result of such reflection. Whatever procedures are developed, it is of the utmost importance that the churches find a way to exercise authoritative teaching in a representative manner if the unity of the one faith and one church is to be given plausible expression. By avoiding the more rigid claims to unchangeable teaching authority, we can advance the prospects for nurturing a consensus among the churches on this issue. We know from history that unnecessary rigidity in enforcing particular decisions by teaching authorities has been combined with the corruption of ecclesial ministry by the arrogance of power. Therefore the ecumenical discussion of this question is particularly sensitive and often painful. Nonetheless, a resolution should not be deemed impossible, for it is painfully obvious that the community of Christians needs the unifying strength of some form of continuing and representative teaching authority. That unity, in turn, is necessary to the church being a sign of the ultimate destiny of humankind.

There is no blinking the historical fact that the clarity of the church as sign has been grievously obscured. It is obscured when congregations of Christians are seduced by the spirit of secularism, so that the difference between the new life in Christ and

the “lifestyles” of the world is no longer obvious. The clarity of the sign is tragically obscured by the moral derelictions of the clergy, since they represent the church, being, as it were, signs of the sign. Most painfully, however, the sign is obscured by the divisions within the church. The churches are separated, and each particular church must recognize that the fullness of its *being* church is thereby impaired. In such a situation, the ecumenical task—the quest for full communion among all Christians—is not optional for those who would be faithful to the church’s Lord.

In the past, each separated church declared that it was the only true church. The pretension of each undermined the credibility of all. The situation today, however, is in some respects more intolerable. Christians of different confessional traditions now officially recognize one another as Christians, and yet they still remain separated and have not even withdrawn the condemnations that their traditions hurled at one another centuries ago. Christians across the several ecclesial divides increasingly recognize that their divisions are no longer justified, and they know that continuing those divisions enervates the church’s mission as a sign of the kingdom. The credibility of every church is undercut by this situation, and particularly the credibility of any church that claims to be the only true church.

Certainly each church should strive to be faithful to the vocation it has received from the Lord, but that vocation can never mean that it is the only true church. Since he is Lord of all who confess his name, communion among all Christians and their churches is a mandate integral to faithfulness. Being true to the nature of the church is incompatible with the claim of any one church to be the only true church. To be sure, ecclesial communion presupposes unity of faith in obedience to the one Lord. Unity of faith, however, does not mean complete conformity in the understanding and interpretation of the one faith. Between churches and within churches, there will always be differences in our understanding of the faith, since, as Saint Paul reminds us, our knowledge is imperfect and will remain so until Our Lord returns in glory.

Now we confess our faith together. Different interpretations need not prevent ecclesial communion, for such differences are an inescapable consequence of the plurality of our historical circumstances and experiences. Unity is necessary because we are in fact united by the one Lord. If it is the case that Christians and churches mutually recognize one another as Christian—and, with few exceptions, that is the case today—then it follows that communion is mandatory. For all our churches, it is an indispensable requirement of being the church of Christ.

At the edge of the third millennium, it should be apparent that the ecumenical question is of paramount importance in the life of the churches.

Ecclesial communion is required to restore the credibility of the church as a sign of the kingdom, which is the future of humankind. Different confessional traditions may continue to enrich the historical self-consciousness of all Christians. They may continue as resources for the fresh formulation of the one faith of the one church, which is an ongoing task. But the different confessional traditions must no longer separate those who recognize one another as Christians. The ecumenical movement of this century has made remarkable contributions in specifying the basis of such mutual recognition. One thinks, for example, of the work of Faith and Order in producing the Lima document on baptism, eucharist, and ministry, or of the more recent common articulation of the apostolic faith as it is summarized in the Nicene Creed.

If leaders in the several churches recognize that unanimity in all matters of theological interpretation is neither possible nor necessary to ecclesial communion, and if they recognize that the mandate of Our Lord himself makes communion between churches mandatory, then they should now decide to enter into urgent discussion on the concrete conditions for resuming ecclesial communion. Since those conditions will differ somewhat between different churches, it will be necessary to explore their details in bilateral discussions. Nobody can predict precisely what would come from such an effort. The critical thing now is a sense of urgency in undertaking such an effort, knowing that no church can be fully true to the Lord or to its own nature as a sign of his kingdom unless it engages the ecumenical challenge.

If, then, the church in the third millennium is to be the church for the world that her Lord calls her to be, we desperately need a revival of confidence in the distinctive Christian message of the kingdom of God. Secularism’s oppressive hegemony can only be broken by Christians who have the nerve to refuse to accommodate the faith to the spirit of the age. In the words of the Hartford Appeal issued by American theologians in 1975, the church must be “against the world for the world.” This requires, of course, that we not identify *the* faith with any one confessional tradition, especially with any one tradition emerging from the tragic divisions of the sixteenth century. It requires also that Christians resist the widespread separation of faith and reason that implicitly denies that all truth is the truth of the one God revealed in Jesus Christ. Moreover, it requires relentless effort to develop more adequate patterns of authoritative teaching ministries—ministries that represent Christ to the community and represent the community to all its members and to the world. Each of these requirements is necessary to, and is advanced by, the ecumenical imperative of full communion among all Christians—so that the church may more believably be a sign in time of the promised future of humanity in the kingdom of God.☐

Books In Review

Tough-minded Feminism

POWER TRIPS AND OTHER JOURNEYS: ESSAYS IN FEMINISM AS CIVIC DISCOURSE. By JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN. *University of Wisconsin Press*. 196 pp. \$27.50 cloth; \$11.95 paper.

FEMINISM WITHOUT ILLUSIONS: A CRITIQUE OF INDIVIDUALISM. By ELIZABETH FOX-GENOVESE. *University of North Carolina Press*. 347 pp. \$24.95.

Reviewed by Suzanne Fields

HOW ARE men and women different and how are they alike? Should women aspire to tame men to live a more civilized life, guided by an assumed moral superiority, or should they stress the ways they can be like men, imitating aggressive male habits attuned to worldly experience? If women forge a sisterhood, must they thereby forego an insistence on individual rights? These are the kinds of questions that tease Jean Bethke Elshtain and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, two scholars who could be called "mothers of neo-feminism" because they try to answer in a complex way the hard questions that movement feminists can only see through an ideological lens.

"I will let others worry about whether I 'deserve' the name 'feminist' or not and, if so, what sort of feminism that might be," writes Elshtain in *Power Trips and Other Journeys: Essays in Feminism as Civic Discourse*. Whether writing about Jane Addams or Eleanor Roosevelt, poverty, pornography,

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or child abuse, she brings an independent interpretation that will please none of the feminist purists, but may change the way most of the rest of us think about these issues.

This description is true also of Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, although she is less timid about using the "f" word, as in f-for-feminist. "My adult personal and professional lives have unfolded in tandem with contemporary feminism, to which I have been committed despite firm opposition to some of its tendencies that I regard as irrational, irresponsible, and dangerous," she writes in *Feminism Without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism*. She sees her book as a contribution to "the defense and explication of feminism," but she then pulls back, and qualifies feminism with the article "a." She knows, as any thoughtful reader quickly perceives, that "a feminism" has little in common with the dogma that passes for scholarship in most women's studies courses.

ELSHTAIN, Centennial Professor of Political Science at Vanderbilt, writes the more accessible book of the two, giving her arguments a human face—most dramatically in her portraits of Jane Addams and Eleanor Roosevelt, women who struggled to fuse personal perspectives with public obligations. Contemporary feminists are bound to have a hard time with Jane Addams and Eleanor Roosevelt, both of whom emphasized the differences between the sexes and who grounded their activism in moral and religious values. In fact, Elshtain has been chastised by professional feminists for even considering Jane Addams, the turn-of-the-century founder of Hull House who viewed the world through a sense of "duty and compassion," a respectable "gender analyst." Indeed, this chaste and maternal champion of the downtrodden has been overtaken by a whole series of fashions, beginning with the flappers, through Rosie the Riveter, to the sexual liberationists, and on down

to our own very modern model of mothers in the military.

Addams argued from concrete human experience, not social abstraction:

With all the efforts made by modern society to nurture and educate the young, how stupid it is to permit the mothers of young children to spend themselves in the coarser work of the world! It is curiously inconsistent that with the emphasis this generation has placed upon the mother and upon the prolongation of infancy, we constantly allow the waste of this most precious material.

Addams, then, was concerned about the need for women to seek protections in society rather than to find ways to participate in it like a man. She called the women of privilege to help the others, and established Hull House as a means whereby women (and men) could help women in need. Thus her ideas about social hygiene and "wholesome" pursuits seem quaint and even subversive to militant feminists today, who seek a single standard of work and sex for both men and women.

Jane Addams asked that women make the political a personal obligation. She would be appalled at the therapeutic society, at our reliance on officials and experts, and our insistence that the state take over the responsibilities she appropriated for Hull House. She maintained a deep suspicion of the overweening power of the state. Moreover, she saw feminism and militarism in total opposition to one another. She would no doubt find it difficult to understand how militant feminists today want to send women to combat—especially to ship mothers who would otherwise be suckling their babes out to war.

"That a 'Jane Addams' is unlikely to come into being in our society at this time tells us much about ourselves," writes Elshtain.

"The fact that contemporary America would not provide the social soil to nurture her points to our loss of a particular civic culture and the ideal of that culture. Paternalistic, hypocritical, and stifling as that could be, especially for young women, it nevertheless instilled in many of its young the conviction that a *human* life is one lived with purpose, dignity, and honor."

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT poses a similar problem for the equal rights feminists. She never considered herself a "feminist" because she believed that women should enjoy protective laws in the workplace. "Women are different from men, their physical functions are different, and the future of the race depends upon their ability to produce healthy children," she said. As a consequence, she supported laws that excluded women from conditions that were hazardous to the health of women and children.

Eleanor Roosevelt is like Jane Addams (her great teacher), writes Elshtain, because she is out of touch with sensibilities of sexual liberation that signify "repression." Also like Addams, she was deeply imbued with a sense of duty, of obligation to those more miserable than she. Both were reformers rather than feminists, gradualists rather than revolutionaries, dedicated to equality *and* difference. "Neither Addams nor Roosevelt," says Elshtain, "wanted the new woman to be an updated version of the old man."

World War I was Mrs. Roosevelt's liberation, enabling her to discard white gloves for a more hands-on approach to life. But she also believed that a mother who nurtured her child was contributing to "public virtue" as much as the man who went off to defend his country. Elshtain reminds us that "[Mrs.] Roosevelt evokes that civic republican tradition marked by Abigail Adams and detailed by Alexis de Tocqueville, when she proclaims that giving the child proper sleep, food, and exercise 'can be tied up with the child's understanding of

patriotism and love of country,' a nonchauvinist love of country that will not launch destructive wars if there is any way they can be prevented."

In the Rooseveltian scenario, mothers extend their own sphere of influence by overthrowing the image of "the lady" *and* the tyranny of nurses and watchful mothers-in-law. They are liberated through responsibility, as they become accountable for the habits and behavior of their children, giving mothers a civic mission as well as greater sexual equality. Still, Eleanor Roosevelt was savvy enough to know that one size could never fit all. She also pleaded with "Mr. Man" to be understanding if his wife wanted to work, noting diplomatically that a working wife could also be a "better helpmate."

IF Eleanor Roosevelt's mode of "activism" has a touch of quaintness in our own time, her moral values, rooted in religious belief and Christian ideals, make the cynics among us particularly uncomfortable. "In the present debates about religion and politics," writes Elshtain, "she would be scandalized that we are scandalized by the open embrace of religious ideals as the basis for political life and thought. That signifies how much times have changed."

By better understanding the complex fullness of the lives of Eleanor Roosevelt and Jane Addams, Elshtain believes that modern feminists can reduce the polarities in their perceptions:

Too often we drive a sharp wedge between difference and equality and demand homogeneity as a vision of equality. There *are*, as well, feminist visions that celebrate difference and say very little about, or are hostile to, equality. But perhaps Addams and Roosevelt suggest an alternative. They suggest that one need not create some new "other" (the vision of the male as an incorrigible brute in

some versions of radical feminism), or eliminate difference *en route* to sex equality (as do some celebrations of androgyny). . . . Both were empowered by a generous spirit, idealist but not cloying, that looked to a future in which each one of us could dream individual dreams, but the greatest dream of all remained the dream of democracy.

In *Power Trips and Other Journeys*, Elshtain never moves from her central focus, which is the importance of the family in a democracy and the way both mother and father contribute to the moral nurture of their children. She excoriates the radical feminists who call for the destruction of the family and those who continually chip away at the effectiveness of the family. "The loss of the family and its characteristic forms of authority and relations would be a general debacle from which we would not soon recover," she says. Such a debacle would, in her view, create an over-bureaucratized world that would make children and adults alike the clients of institutionally powerful social bureaucrats and engineers.

She wants us to look again at the notion of a family wage to enable women to care for their children, a notion she finds less far-fetched than the vision propounded by feminists who see "coequal individualist male and female careerists avidly exercising their untrammelled choices as their children are tended to in modern and spacious day-care centers." For our political language does not capture the "queasiness" most Americans feel at severing child care from the home, and she frets that our debates over child care are rarely conducted in relation to issues concerning our sense of self, responsibility, and place.

Throughout her book, whether talking about child abuse or pornography, Elshtain asks us to look freshly and without ideological blinders at the troubling questions

facing families today. Child abuse, she notes, is a tragic phenomenon, but she questions the way we have popularized it as an "all-American affliction" knowing no barriers of class, race, or culture. As a result we ignore the ways it is specifically exacerbated in poor families.

In discussing pornography, she calls for commonsense compromises between first amendment issues and the sanctity of society. Communities, she says, "should have the power to regulate and curb open and visible assaults on human dignity, but they should not seek to eradicate or condemn either sexual fantasies or erotic representations as such."

Whatever the particular question, she insists that we can't separate politics from morals: individual freedom must be rooted in community discipline and a sense of personal obligation. Women must understand and appreciate the historical significance of their power and powerlessness as mothers. In their search for independence, they must also reaffirm their need to remain interdependent with men:

That I impose a weighty political burden on women, and that this is in some sense unfair, is undoubtedly the case. But women, from a double vision that straddles powerlessness and power, are in a powerful position to insist with Albert Camus that one must never avert one's eyes from the suffering of children and, seeing that suffering, one is required to act.

It shouldn't surprise that Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, a professor of the humanities and the director of women's studies at Emory University in Atlanta, writes a blurb for Elshtain's book. Both women are concerned with the subject that is the title of Fox-Genovese's book: *Feminism Without Illusions*.

Fox-Genovese introduces her book with an anecdote about one of her students in a women's studies course she was teaching who balked

at being called a "feminist." To the student, feminism meant "the denial of femininity. It suggested lesbianism. It led to 'bra burnings,' men-hating, and an almost irritating aggressiveness." Nor was this student alone.

In noting the bad press of contemporary feminism, however, Fox-Genovese thinks that feminism is blamed for too many of the most disturbing aspects of modern life: "divorce, latch-key children, teenage alcoholism, domestic violence, the sexual abuse of children."

She's right, of course. The movement has not been *that* powerful. But feminism's bad press is largely deserved for its having helped create an ideological atmosphere that allows many of the disturbing aspects of modern life to gain ground. The root of the problem, Fox-Genovese tells us, is the elevation of individualism over the common good—a development that has led to unforeseen and unintended consequences. The right of women to enjoy "no fault" divorce, for example, has also freed men from their sense of obligation to support women and children. In general, divorce leads to a substantial rise in the man's income and a substantial drop in the woman's. It has helped to "feminize" poverty, depriving women of emotional and financial security, requiring states to crack down on "deadbeat dads." A woman's "independence" after divorce is often nothing more than a change of dependencies, requiring support from the government instead of her husband. Thus the moral stigma attached to the man who leaves his wife and children has almost disappeared. Today we view the problem of men who abandon their families as part of a larger "sociological" or "economic" problem, rather than a failure of moral responsibility.

SIMILARLY, a working woman often exchanges her dependency on a man for a dependency on a harsh environment. When women gave up protective laws in the workplace, they became free to work for

larger salaries in environments that are dangerous to their health and the health of their children. And feminists cheer this as progress toward choice.

As for sex, the sexual revolution gives new freedom to women to enjoy sexual experience without constraints, but the same new freedom confuses signals between the sexes and leads to phenomena like date rape. "Young women no longer need worry (or worry as acutely as their predecessors did) if a young man will respect her if she has sexual relations with him or even other men before marriage," writes Fox-Genovese. "They do, however, have cause to worry that when they choose *not* to have sexual relations with a particular man, their 'no' may not be respected."

In academe, Fox-Genovese attacks the "politically correct," and fears a growing Tower of Babel at our universities. She is deeply bothered by those feminists who dismiss the intellectual canon taught in colleges "as an exercise in colonization." It may be sad, even pathetic, that anyone has to defend the Great Books, but the need for a defense has become commonplace, and Fox-Genovese spends a major portion of her book doing just that. She wants to extend the canon, but not obliterate it.

Is it not without some irony that the feminist multiculturalists frequently celebrate the virtues of the Third World, where the rights of all women (and men) are considerably more limited than their own. They criticize their own culture for an oppression they do not notice in other countries, never acknowledging the freedoms they enjoy in making such criticisms. "For better or worse," Fox-Genovese points out, "we are also, as recent events in Eastern Europe and China testify, the model for the aspirations of people around the world."

Claims for absolute equality often dull the eyes of feminists who should know better. As an example, Fox-Genovese identifies the debate among historians when the Equal Employment Opportunity Com-

mission tried to prove that Sears, Roebuck discriminated against women. Sears hadn't hired women for the lucrative high-commission jobs that required late and irregular hours because women preferred to be home with their families at conventional hours. When a historian testified to that fact, she was attacked viciously by feminist historians, even though she represented a respectable "feminist" position that men and women are different in their approaches to family life. Sisterhood is selectively applied.

The dominant critique of this book, like that of Jean Bethke Elshstain, focuses on how feminism's blind spots have undermined the family and a cohesive sense of community. "If my argument differs from those of others, it is primarily in my conviction that feminism, in all its guises, is itself the daughter of that male individualism which so many feminists are attacking."

Feminist selfishness, Fox-Genovese says, benefits the white middle-class woman and short changes her less-fortunate sisters. An insistence on individual rewards is made at the expense of lower economic classes and men and women of minority races. Moreover, sexual liberation, which called for women to imitate the sexual behavior of men, is particularly painful for poor teenage girls in the ghetto, who, when liberated, are often left with several illegitimate children, usually fathered by different men. Mother Nature does not distribute sexual repercussions equally.

FOX-GENOVESE is troubled by pornography, attacking the argument that it demeans only women, and that it is hence an infringement of their civil rights. Instead she says that it "offers an unacceptable mirror of ourselves as a people" and needs to be regulated with a view toward achieving a balance between liberty and license: "To those who, shaking with fear, argue that any limitation on freedom invites more and more limitations and

threatens the imposition of a police state, we can only answer that no freedom could long survive unless the American people show an ability to distinguish sensibly among cases."

Drawn there by her logic, she is even willing to confront abortion. She asks how feminists who pride themselves on seeking a community of nurturing and protective sisterhood can reconcile a defense

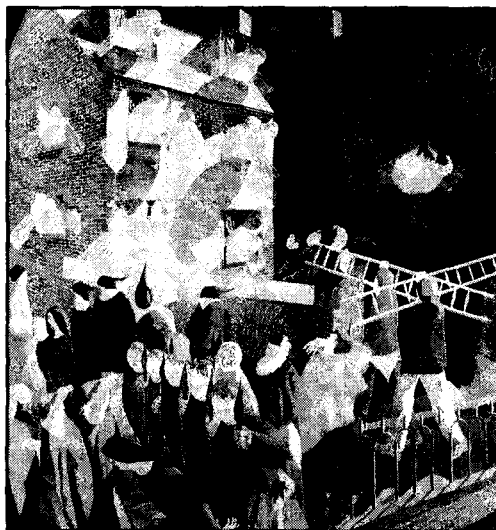
of abortion on the grounds that it is an absolute independent right and that reproduction is a private matter.

Fox-Genovese, then, struggles valiantly to distinguish sensibly among cases and ideals. She is not always successful, and her prose is dense and repetitive, academic to a fault. But for those who work their way through her analysis she offers provocative arguments, and she is

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unafraid to challenge the ideologically pure on the left and right alike.

Many conservatives will no doubt rage at her support for women's studies, her scathing attack on Allan Bloom, her ambiguous discussion of affirmative action, her unequivocal damnation of bourgeois individualism. But feminists are bound to find this book even more troubling. Some have already voiced fears that her respect for male and female differences would either return women to second-class citizenship, restricting them to a private sphere in the home that lacks public power, or suggest to them that if they try hard enough they can reinvigorate the myth of superwoman and aim to have it all.

This is in fact far from the case. Like Elshtain, Fox-Genovese is more interested in stirring a debate than in providing hard-and-fast answers to the questions she raises. Such a debate is in itself healthy and may be healing. It is one now being joined by conservative women, and suggests a new phase of feminism, one that conducted properly could end by strengthening the family.

A Guide to Barth

HOW TO READ KARL BARTH: THE SHAPE OF HIS THEOLOGY. By GEORGE HUNSINGER. Oxford University Press. 298 pp. \$32.50.

Reviewed by
David Lewis Stokes, Jr.

THERE ARE TWO types of guidebook to a major gallery. One is designed for the occasional visitor who wants to find his way about with minimal effort and wishes to emerge with a general overview of the contents. The second type exists for those who know a particular gallery well and love its very stones. This type is not an introduction at all but an illumination, making explicit a

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devotee's deep sense of the gallery's unity and themes; it is often a work of art in itself, with a texture and depth as richly nuanced as the gallery it depicts. George Hunsinger has given us such a guidebook to the theology of Karl Barth—a book that, for all its density, is nothing less than luminous.

Hunsinger makes no attempt to quick-march us through the chunky thirteen part-volumes of the *Church Dogmatics*. (The novice who expects such a tour from the book's title will be disappointed.) Nor is he interested in battling the standard caricatures with which Barth is still rendered: Barth as radical dialectician (the early Updike), Barth as reluctant exponent of *analogia entis* (von Balthasar), Barth as Swiss Olympiad (Niebuhr), Barth as herald of modern secularity (Harvey Cox). If he has done nothing else, Hunsinger has gone a long way towards razing the various scaffoldings that obstruct many readings of the *Dogmatics*—even the sympathetic ones.

It is precisely through a close reading of the *Dogmatics* that Hunsinger provides a way around the clichés. Such a reading reveals that, contrary to his critics and friends, Barth's enterprise is dominated by no one structural principle—be it dialectics, Christology, the triumph of grace, or Hegelian monism. Rather, what Hunsinger would have us discern are the motifs intertwined and closely woven throughout the *Dogmatics*.

MOTIF here is a problematic word, as Hunsinger readily acknowledges, suggesting as it does a methodological form that can be neatly abstracted from Barth's material content—similar to the way Tillich's notion of correlation precedes (and predetermines) his system. And this is exactly what Hunsinger is *not* suggesting. (I fear, protest as he will, that by using this nomenclature Hunsinger has inadvertently given permission to the seminarian tyro to excavate the *Dogmatics* in search of motifs.) These motifs—Hunsinger delineates six

of them—are more like the moves of a multidimensional chess game, where each motif determines and is determined by the others, and all the motifs are controlled by the game itself.

Hunsinger begins with Barth's actualism. He does not shy from accepting the (often derisive) charge that Barth's notion of revelation is actualistic: God's being located in his divine activity and not in any perdurable structure of Being. But lest this imply that God is occasionally absent from his creation—a whimsical ghost blowing in and out of a vacant house—Barth balances this motif of actualism with that of objectivism: in Jesus Christ God binds himself fully to our human knowing. Or, to put it differently (and to bring in another motif, that of realism), God's being in activity is grounded totally and made known in the scriptural narratives of Jesus Christ; our apprehension of God depends neither on our own subjectivity nor a divine capriciousness.

The center of Hunsinger's book examines at length how these motifs play themselves out in the *Dogmatics'* understanding of truth—truth as revelation, as salvation, and as encounter. This approach permits Hunsinger to survey the basic contours of the *Dogmatics* while keeping in sharp focus what critics often contend to be Barth's Achilles' heel, the swamping of human agency by divine action—the reduction of human freedom to a mere shadow play in the light of Christ.

Thus, turning about the motif of scriptural realism, Hunsinger superbly recapitulates the objectivity of the Atonement as presented by Barth, all the while showing in what way we are subjectively included in the work of the Cross through this objective proclamation. Like few other exegetes, he captures that creative tension unique to the *Dogmatics* where, though Barth will allow for no existential or sacramental soteriology, the motif of scriptural realism—based as it is on the palpable

narrative of Jesus Christ—enables us to be determined by the Cross and be contemporaneous with it. After Barth, most “narrative theology” is pretty watery gruel indeed.

The problems that linger in Hunsinger’s presentation are two-fold: one results from the book’s necessary compression (and is thus not major); the other from Barth’s own formulations (and is thus major indeed).

WHEN Hunsinger places Barth in debate with Aquinas, space limitations make him content to repeat all the old neo-orthodox strictures about “natural” theology; he leaves unpacked Thomas’ extremely contextual statement that “the soul is by nature capable or open to grace.” One wishes that Hunsinger would have tuned the conversation between Barth and Aquinas much more finely than he does.

Much more problematic is Hunsinger’s final chapter. This concerns Barth’s notion of there being secular parables of the truth, ways in which secularity witnesses to the gospel. The chapter ought to function as the book’s summation, but Hunsinger strangely gives it the status of epilogue and refrains from fleshing out some possible implications.

In recent years, a number of theologians have seized—Hans Küng a bit too emphatically—upon Barth’s contention that certain secular “words” provide parabolic witness to the Word of God as a way to bring Barth in closer dialogue with the public square. And certainly there are provocative hints in the *Dogmatics*’ final pages that the Church and society share a language fraught with revelation. But Barth remains adamant that the point of contact between the Church and society is always a point of sheer miracle. Since he refrains from any attempt to sketch the structure of this miraculous illumination lest he let in “natural” theology by the back door, the concept of secular parables remains vague if not unrealized.

Still, this problem is really with

Barth and not with Hunsinger. We should thank the latter for giving us a splendid introduction and a sustained piece of theology in its own right. Hunsinger makes it clear why, for all the unresolved problems in the *Dogmatics*, those problems are put forth by a father of the Church catholic and one of the best conversation partners going.

Countercultural Christians

UNDERSTANDING FUNDAMENTALISM AND EVANGELICALISM. By GEORGE M. MARSDEN. *Eerdmans*. 206 pp. \$12.95 paper.

Reviewed by R. Booth Fowler

EVANGELICALISM and fundamentalism continue to represent a vital and flourishing sector of American religion, one often at war with the American cultural elite and latterly much engaged in politics. For many of us, however, the evangelical and fundamentalist world, while it fascinates, is also remote from our lives—and perhaps from our sympathies as well. Thus George Marsden’s *Understanding Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism*, a collection of his elegant essays on the subject, is particularly welcome.

In straightforward and accessible language, Marsden offers a solid introduction to the subject. He explores the histories of the two movements, he examines their politics (past and present), and he pays special attention to the interactions of Protestant evangelicalism with science. As the title promises, Marsden’s range is broad. Nevertheless, the book holds together most satisfactorily as a unit. Moreover, while the tradition of writing history well is somewhat ragged these

days, the same cannot be said of Marsden. He writes well and he writes concisely.

Marsden begins with a detailed but lively discussion of what evangelicalism includes in American religion and how fundamentalism fits within the larger evangelical tradition. From there he proceeds to an account of the evangelical “Protestant Crisis” and the emergence of fundamentalism from 1865 to World War I, and provides vivid portraits of some of evangelicalism’s late-nineteenth-century stars, such as Henry Ward Beecher, Dwight Moody, and Phillips Brooks. The significant role played in this period by both women and black evangelical preachers is given its due. And he describes the tremendous energies that were given to revivals and missions and the tension between such activities and the movement’s first tentative steps toward social involvement.

Marsden is much taken up with the issue of how evangelicalism and fundamentalism met the challenge of the new intellectual movements of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century—especially their attempts to cope with scientific/historical approaches to Scripture and the appearance of evolution as popular dogma in American intellectual life. Here one is given a very vivid sense of certain innovative impulses within conservative Protestantism: for example, the appearance in the decades before World War I of the Holiness movement, focused on the transformation of the human heart by the Spirit, and Pentecostalism, with its accent on such manifestations of the Spirit as healing and speaking in tongues.

THIS phase of Marsden’s story ends with the self-conscious rise of fundamentalism after World War I. He picks it up again at about 1930 and brings it to the present, explaining how modern evangelicalism evolved in recent decades into a major force in our national life. In Marsden’s view, evangelicalism emerges as less separatist than fun-

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damentalism and a much larger expression of conservative Protestantism. And about this latter, he makes very clear how tremendously diverse it has become by today: Billy Graham, he argues, in fact may be its popular unifying symbol, but there is surprisingly little unity by any test. At the same time, Marsden encourages us to wonder if modern evangelicalism will long maintain what boundaries it still has from the pressures of modernity that it supposedly challenges. He is not sure that conservative Protestants will emerge with their own world intact, much less conquer any others.

Later in the book, Marsden moves from history to politics. He argues what is now the conventional wisdom, that evangelicalism has a long tradition of political involvement in the United States:

the 1980s were nothing new. Moreover, now as in the past, there are many political strands within evangelicalism and fundamentalism. In Marsden's view, diversity is the rubric under which one can best understand the contemporary Religious Right, itself only one aspect, after all, of an even more diverse conservative Protestantism.

In approaching the fundamentalists in particular, Marsden delights in the paradoxes he has found, the swings between anti-intellectualism and determined rationalism, individualism and communalism, militancy and pragmatism. Marsden's picture of these contradictions is consistently convincing, though at times one begins to wonder if there really is any such thing as fundamentalism.

Marsden is at his very best dealing with what appears to intrigue him

most, that is, the history of evangelical interactions with science. He sees the development of "Creation Science," for example, as an expression of an evangelicalism determined to speak in scientific terms. And he notes that there is a long tradition in the United States of evangelical affinity for a kind of empirical approach to reality. Over and over again, he would caution us against easy generalizations about the complicated world of evangelicals and fundamentalists.

MARSDEN'S historical account is primarily focused on ideas, that is, doctrines and lines of doctrine, their origins, development, conflicts, and—sometimes—resolution. It is, of course, possible to tell this tale more sociologically or more in terms of the hearts and minds of ordinary believers, or even focused more strictly on realms of the spirit. Especially in the scholarly world, however, where it sometimes seems that conservative Protestantism is to be taken seriously in every way except intellectually, Marsden's focus is a valuable restorative.

In his final pages, this careful, reflective historian of religion rather unexpectedly delivers something of a sermon. He insists that intellectual disputes matter, that arguments in the academy can affect Christianity and much else, and that struggling over them is important for the Christian. He calls for Christians to craft an intellectual position as independent as possible from the dominant intellectual fads in the university and in intellectual life in general. He castigates post-modernism, its inability to get beyond its dogma of individual feeling and opinion, and its negation of any broader truths—an understanding profoundly incompatible with Christian commitment. And Marsden comments pointedly on the all but total collapse of Christianity in once-Protestant universities that yielded to the winds of fashion in intellectual culture. Evangelicalism could have no more sympathetic, skilled,

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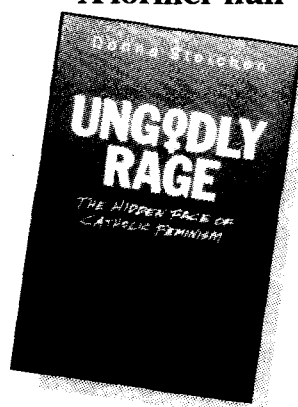
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The Neoconservatives

WATCH ON THE RIGHT: CONSERVATIVE INTELLECTUALS IN THE REAGAN ERA. By J. DAVID HOEVELER, JR. *University of Wisconsin Press*. 333 pp. \$24.95.

Reviewed by Dan Himmelfarb

THE DUST JACKET of *Watch on the Right*, which consists of chapter-long essays on eight different conservative intellectuals, advertises that the book "dramatizes . . . the breadth of the conservative coalition," and that the subjects of the book "represent a very wide spectrum of conservative thought." Nor does the publisher's understanding of the book differ from that of its author. In his Introduction, J. David Hoeveler, Jr., a Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, describes his book as one that "explores the variety of conservative thought in the United States," and that "confirms the pluralist nature of conservatism." Because "conservatism comprises many moods and many voices," writes Hoeveler, "I have . . . selected on the basis of variety."

These statements are misleading, for they give the impression that the eight principals of *Watch on the Right* span the American conservative spectrum, and that Hoeveler has chosen representatives from each of the major factions: the Old Right, the New Right, neoconservatism, and libertarianism. In fact, however, Hoeveler's group of conservatives consists of five neoconservatives and three fellow travelers. While Hoeveler is by no means oblivious to the existence of the other versions of conservatism—he briefly discusses the Old Right and the New Right in an introductory chapter—*Watch on the Right* is effectively a book about

neoconservatism.

The five neoconservatives to whom Hoeveler devotes a chapter each are Irving Kristol, Michael Novak, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Hilton Kramer, and R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr. The fellow travelers are George F. Will, William F. Buckley, Jr., and Robert Nisbet, who, despite ties to the Old Right, and despite the absence of a radical—or even liberal—past, all have a great deal in common with neoconservatives. Will, Buckley, and Nisbet, moreover, are all distinguishable from the paleoconservatives insofar as none demonstrates the hostility toward neoconservatism that is currently such a prominent feature of the Old Right.

Thus, though George F. Will's occasional expression of discomfort with modernity—*Statecraft as Soulcraft* (1983) is a sustained example of this phenomenon—may appear to place him in the paleoconservative camp, Will is in perfect agreement with the neoconservatives on the major issues. Like the neoconservatives, and unlike the paleoconservatives, Will is a defender of a "conservative welfare state" (to use Irving Kristol's phrase) and of the (original) goals of the civil rights movement. Like the neoconservatives, and unlike the paleoconservatives, Will champions an interventionist foreign policy and is unambiguously and unfailingly pro-Israel.

UPON the death of the neoconservative hero Henry Jackson in 1983, Will wrote a column entitled "The Finest Public Servant I Have Known," which was similar in substance and tone to Michael Novak's moving remembrance in *Commentary*. While a number of attempts have been made to define the term "neoconservative," perhaps the most plausible definition is "Jackson Democrat." In his column Will pronounced himself a "Jackson Republican."

And if neoconservatives are willing to claim Will as one of their own, paleoconservatives apparently are not. In *The Conservative*

Movement, a 1988 analysis of American conservatism written from an Old Right perspective, Will makes a single appearance—in the chapter on neoconservatism. (Paul Gottfried, incidentally, who coauthored that book with Thomas Fleming, would undoubtedly dismiss Senator Jackson in the same way he dismisses virtually every other neoconservative—as a "social democrat.") A strong case can be made that George Will is a *de facto* neoconservative.

So, too, with William F. Buckley, Jr.—though to a lesser degree. At one time, Buckley's *National Review* regularly published articles and editorials critical of modernity in general and liberal democracy in particular. But Buckley and his magazine have long since made their peace with modernity; rather than attacking liberal democracy from the right, *National Review* now defends it against attacks from the left. Buckley's magazine, for example, once opposed the principle of colorblindness from the right; it now defends that principle against its opponents on the left. Thus, thirty years after publishing an editorial defending segregation on the grounds that whites are "the advanced race," *National Review* published a sympathetic obituary for the civil rights leader Bayard Rustin.

Normal Podhoretz and *Commentary* came to neoconservatism by way of the radical left. It might be said that William F. Buckley and *National Review* have come to neoconservatism by way of the reactionary right. Today the principal distinction between *National Review* and *Commentary* is one of form rather than substance.

Robert Nisbet is the only conservative in *Watch on the Right* whom paleoconservatives are willing to claim as one of their own. This fact is consistent with the fact that Nisbet, as Hoeveler correctly notes, is the conservative in *Watch on the Right* who is "most directly situated in European conservatism," and that Nisbet's conservatism, as Hoeveler again correctly notes,

DAN HIMMELFARB, a new contributor to *FIRST THINGS*, is a former Assistant Managing Editor of *The Public Interest*.

"register[s] a cautious and skeptical attitude toward liberal democracy." According to Midge Decter, who certainly knows a neoconservative when she sees one, Nisbet "is not now and has never been a neoconservative."

NEVERTHELESS, Nisbet does have some neoconservative connections. He is, for example, a long-time contributor to neoconservative periodicals. *The Public Interest* published an article by Nisbet in its inaugural issue, and parts of *The Twilight of Authority* (1975), one of Nisbet's best-known and most important books, originally appeared in *The Public Interest*, *Commentary*, and *Encounter*. Though Nisbet is a paleoconservative, he is not a paleoconservative of the anti-neoconservative variety.

It is therefore incorrect to say, as Hoeverler does in his Afterword, that

"the eight individuals studied in this book . . . differed significantly in their ideas." For the principals of *Watch on the Right* in fact represent a rather narrow spectrum of American conservative thought: with the possible exception of Robert Nisbet, there are no differences of a fundamental kind among the eight conservatives discussed in this book.

Despite the false advertising, however, *Watch on the Right* is in many respects an impressive book. First, it is clearly the product of hard work. Hoeverler conducted interviews with each of the principals of his study, and the footnotes make it clear that he has read virtually everything these conservatives have written (as well as much that has been written about them).

Second, *Watch on the Right* is balanced: unlike many analysts of the American right, Hoeverler man-

ages to avoid the extremes of obsequiousness and scornfulness. Hoeverler's essays are always respectful (and occasionally admiring), but never uncritical.

Third, Hoeverler writes intelligently about a range of subjects. Though he is not an expert in foreign policy, sociology, or art, the historian Hoeverler displays a command of these subjects (in his essays on Kirkpatrick, Nisbet, and Kramer, respectively) exceeding that of most educated laymen.

Fourth, Hoeverler makes a significant contribution to the literature on American conservatism by providing sustained and systematic treatments of conservatives about whom there has not been a great deal written. Though it has become increasingly difficult to say anything about Buckley, Will, Kristol, or Kirkpatrick that has not been said already, even readers well-

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acquainted with American conservatism will be educated by Hoever's essays on Kramer, Novak, Tyrrell, and Nisbet.

Finally, by including a brief biographical section in each essay, Hoever permits his readers to learn about his subjects' backgrounds as well as their ideas, and to discover how their conservatism has developed.

STILL, there are some omissions and some mistakes. Conspicuous in its absence from Hoever's essay on William F. Buckley, Jr. is any discussion of what might be the most interesting development in Buckley's thought: his transformation from reactionary antiliberal to conservative liberal. The young Buckley was an opponent of two of the hallmark principles of a liberal polity: academic freedom and colorblindness. In *God and Man at Yale* (1951), Buckley defended the right of a university to demand intellectual orthodoxy from its faculty; his thesis was that professors should be prohibited from teaching anything but Christianity and laissez faire. In *Up from Liberalism* (1959), Buckley defended race-consciousness—i.e., the view that the accident of skin pigmentation has social, political, and legal relevance; on the issue of segregation, he sided with the southern whites. Today, of course, it is the antiliberal left rather than the antiliberal right that leads the attack against academic freedom and colorblindness. And it is the so-called conservatives, joined by an older Buckley, who now defend these principles.

Hoever's book also overlooks some interesting changes in the foreign policy thinking of Irving Kristol, who, in response to the decline and fall of Communism, has moved away from an ideological approach to foreign policy, and toward a realist approach. Writing in the inaugural issue of *The National Interest* in the fall of 1985, Kristol argued that a conservative foreign policy must have "a significant ideological dimension." He

had apparently changed his mind, however, by the time that magazine was celebrating its fifth anniversary. In the Fall 1990 issue of the journal, Kristol described a conservative foreign policy as one that is "defined in 'national interest' terms."

The author of *Watch on the Right* appears to have missed this change in Kristol's views. Kristol, according to Hoever, is one who "spoke out as forcefully as any of the conservatives in denouncing the realist concept of foreign policy"; while "some conservatives warned that realpolitik was simply not effective, Kristol condemned it in principle." Hoever's book may have gone to press too early to take account of this change in Kristol's foreign policy thinking (though it must be said that Kristol has been moving steadily toward realism for the last several years). The change, in any event, is a significant one, since neoconservatives have long been criticized by paleoconservatives for excessive foreign policy idealism and for their support of "global democratic revolution."

SO MUCH for the omissions. As for Hoever's mistakes, most of them have to do with the Straussians and their place within American conservatism. In his introductory chapter, for example, Hoever writes that the Straussians "significantly extended the intellectual reach of the Old Right," that they "reinforced the parameters of the Old Right," and that they "extended the ontological foundations of the Old Right." Hoever apparently identifies the Straussians with the Old Right because Leo Strauss himself, like many paleoconservatives, was critical of modern political philosophy. Yet it seems clear that Straussians have far more in common with neoconservatives than with paleoconservatives. In fact, there is considerable overlap between the neoconservatives and the so-called "eastern" Straussians.

William Kristol, for example, currently Chief of Staff to Vice President Quayle, is a neoconser-

vative by birth (he is Irving Kristol's son) and a Straussian by education (he studied with Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr.). And both Walter Berns and Robert A. Goldwin, each of whom studied with Strauss himself, are affiliated with the neoconservative American Enterprise Institute. Neoconservative periodicals, moreover, regularly publish articles by Straussians. Contributors to the Winter 1987 issue of *The Public Interest*, for example, which was devoted to the bicentennial of the Constitution, included not only the neoconservatives Irving Kristol, Nathan Glazer, and James Q. Wilson, but also the Straussians Walter Berns, Harvey Mansfield, and Thomas Pangle.

And if there is affinity between Straussians and neoconservatives, there is discord between Straussians and paleoconservatives. Straussian students of the American Founding—of both the "eastern" and "western" variety—view the Declaration of Independence as the central document of the American regime. Reverence for the Declaration, however, is not a common paleoconservative attitude. On the contrary: reading that document out of the American Founding has been a continuing project of the Old Right. For paleoconservatives, the Straussian idea that equality is a "conservative principle" (to use Harry V. Jaffa's phrase) is heretical. Abraham Lincoln is a Straussian hero, but a paleoconservative villain.

Hoever's treatment of the Straussians' relationship to American conservatism, which is an interesting and somewhat complicated issue, is thus rather careless. But this carelessness is an anomaly in what is otherwise a careful book. Though it is not a comprehensive study of the "conservative movement," *Watch on the Right* does what other books—such as Peter Steinfels' *The Neoconservatives* (1979) and Sidney Blumenthal's *The Rise of the Counter-Establishment* (1986)—do not: it provides a thoughtful and sympathetic analysis of neoconservatism.

BRIEFLY NOTED

OUR IDEA OF GOD: AN INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY. By THOMAS V. MORRIS. *University of Notre Dame Press*. 192 pp. \$18.95.

A clear and solid introduction to philosophical theology, which is best described as an attempt to answer the questions children ask: Where is God? What is God like? How do we know that God is all powerful? Is God in time? At times Morris' attempts at clarity appear almost pedantic, but better than the standard incomprehensible studies. A good defense of the coherence of theism.

—Ian Markham

DOING FAITHJUSTICE: AN INTRODUCTION TO CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT. By FRED KAMMER, S.J. *Paulist Press*. 246 pp. \$12.95 paper.

It is not the author's fault that the book appears just after *Centesimus Annus*, an encyclical that is in starkest contrast to his rendering of Catholic social thought. Quite apart from that, the neologism in the title reflects, unfortunately, the author's

conflation of conventional leftisms with Catholic teaching. The social teachings of his church deserve much better than that.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES AND PUBLIC POLICY. Edited by RICHARD C. CHEWNING. *Navigator Press (Colorado Springs)*. 330 pp. \$15.95 paper.

The fourth volume in a series titled "Christians in the Marketplace." This one includes everything from unemployment compensation to education policy to foreign trade. Contributors include Carl F. Henry, Theodore R. Malloch, and James W. Skillen. The series will no doubt be welcomed by those who want a closer than usual connection between biblical prescription and contemporary practice.

JEWISH LITERACY: THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE JEWISH RELIGION, ITS PEOPLE, AND ITS HISTORY. By JOSEPH TELUSHKIN. *William Morrow*. 688 pp. \$24.95.

Nearly 350 articles covering virtually everything about Jews and Judaism

(the title is a play on E. D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*). One may quibble with the author's treatment of this or that topic, but overall the book is clearly an enormous achievement. The articles are intelligent and well-written, concise yet comprehensive, and are often graced by touches of humor. Organized topically, *Jewish Literacy* can be read in long stretches or used for quick reference. It will undoubtedly, and deservedly, become a standard work in the field, for both Jews and non-Jews.

UNAPOLOGETIC THEOLOGY: A CHRISTIAN VOICE IN A PLURALISTIC CONVERSATION. By WILLIAM C. PLACHER. *Westminster/John Knox Press*. 178 pp. \$13.95 paper.

"Theology by itself will not solve the social problems facing us," the author modestly opines. But, if Christians work together with Marxists and others who are devoted to justice, we can make the world a much better place. And so forth. Along the way is much politicized pondering of contemporary questions in theological methodology.

Richard
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A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Looking at Islam After Kipling and Hesse

Books on Islam, we are told, are enjoying brisk sales. For reasons related to the imperialist past of those countries, intellectuals in England and France have generally paid more attention to Islam than have Americans. Apart from academic specialists, American interest in Islam has been limited largely to people concerned about the Christian missionary enterprise in the Middle East, or to friends of Israel who want to understand their enemy. A missions magazine, *The Cross and the Minaret*, was received at the Lutheran parsonage where this writer was a child some forty years ago. Muslims (then called Moslems or Mohammedans) seemed an exotic breed, but a breed eminently worth saving, to judge by the bowdlerized version of *Arabian Nights* that children were then allowed to read.

The revived interest in Islam today is not entirely unrelated to that continuing missionary project. Earlier this year, in the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II called upon the nations of the world to "Open the door to Christ." He did not mention Islam by name, but there is no doubt that he had Islam in mind, urging countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to grant a measure of religious freedom. Authorities in the Vatican speak candidly about the coming century as a period of religious warfare, with Islam as the chief antagonist. That warfare has been underway for years in places such as Indonesia and sectors of sub-Saharan Africa. The "challenge of Islam" comes in for increasing mention also in evangelical Protestant publications, where it is suggested that the reconfiguration of forces following the six-week war in the Gulf has opened up new missionary possibilities.

Missionary considerations and the safety of Israel aside, Americans have for two decades had other occasions to ponder the worlds of Islam. The oil crisis of the early 1970s provoked much discussion of

"the Arabs," but the specifically Islamic factor came more forcefully to the fore with the Ayatollah Khomeini's 1979 revolution in Iran and the taking of the American hostages. In the media's construction of the world stage, "Islamic fundamentalism" has loomed large in recent years. Because the same media managers were at war with the fundamentalism of the religious right in this country, the reporting and commentary tended to become a running polemic against undifferentiated "religious fanaticism" that threatened the secular assumptions of Western elites who had been misled to believe that religion is a vestigial phenomenon from the unenlightened past.

A Teaching Moment

Following the war in the Gulf, however, there may be a rare teaching moment in which more Americans are in a mood to get serious about Islam. Whatever the "new world order" turns out to mean, there is no doubt that those peoples and nations informed by Islam will be an important part of it. For the general reader, an excellent entry point to the subject of Islam and the contemporary world is Roy Mottahedeh's *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (Pantheon). Iran, of course, is dominated by the minority Shiite group, as distinct from the Sunnis who are the great majority in the Muslim world. But it is precisely a merit of *The Mantle* that it must explain the differences between these and other divisions within Islam. The conflicts between Shiite and Sunni, not so incidentally, have everything to do with the internal and external tensions shaping the future of Iraq.

While attending to the intellectual, spiritual, and political aspects, Mottahedeh's is a very human telling of the Islamic story, from Mohammed in the seventh century up to the present. That is, he unveils

the history through the story of individuals, both famous and obscure. Their stories are stories of wrestling with the call to be faithful in a world that seems not to be amenable to the revealed order. The word Islam means submission or surrender, and a Muslim is one who has surrendered to the revelation of God through the Prophet. In the Christian view of things, Islam is impossibly "legalistic." Shiite Islam is considerably more philosophical than Sunni, but Shiites, too, sometimes find literal obedience to the laws quite impossible.

Every Iranian, Mottahedeh writes, knows the story of the mullah who, on his way to the mosque for morning prayers, was splashed by a dog shaking itself in a drainage ditch. The mullah, not having time to change his clothes before prayers, refused to look directly at the animal that had sprayed water on him and rushed on, muttering, "God willing, it's a goat." Water from dogs is ritually polluting, while water from goats is not. A good deal of Muslim everyday life, suggests Mottahedeh, is made somewhat more religiously possible by occasional recourse to the only slightly self-deceptive hope, "God willing, it's a goat." It seems likely that the followers of all moral codes have equivalent devices for getting through the day without feeling gravely compromised. But Muslims who cannot help but come into contact with the West, and who eagerly desire the benefits of such contact, have particular occasion to hope that, God willing, it's a goat.

Islam's "West-stricken-ness"

There are few things more important to understanding contemporary Islam, says Mottahedeh, than what one Iranian writer named as *gharbzadegi*. It might be translated, all too literally, as "West-stricken-ness." Islam is stricken by the West both in the sense of being awe-struck and in the sense that one is stricken by a disease. The condition is compounded by the fact that most Muslim intellectuals know that their critique of the West is itself largely drawn from the West. The Shah of Iran was hated because he was so eager for the approval of the West that he seemed to grovel, especially to the Americans. But the most chauvinistic of Muslim thinkers know that Islam is defined by an inescapable "over-againstness" toward the West. They insist that Islam must be respected on its own terms, but the maddening thing is that this always turns out to mean that Islam must be respected by the West, which inevitably bestows respect or contempt on its own terms.

The harsh critic, says Mottahedeh, is tempted to repeat the charge leveled by Turgenev's spokesman in *Smoke*: "It wouldn't be so bad if we really did despise [the West]; but that is all talk and lies. We swear at it and abuse it, but its opinion is really the only one we value; and fundamentally it's the opinion of Parisian

idiots." Or, as is now the case, American idiots.

If they knew about the book, many Islamic intellectuals would not dispute William McNeil's title for his survey of world history, *The Rise of the West*. One of Mottahedeh's characters, a devout Muslim who had studied many years in the sacred city of Qom, thought to resolve the dilemma of Islam's minority status by proposing to himself that there were in fact many different "Muslim" systems of thought in the world. It is a little like the notion of "anonymous Christians" that is associated with the late Karl Rahner. The people in the West, whose achievements witnessed to the favor of God, are, Ahmad thought, really Muslims in some mysterious way. "After all," he says, "despite the beauty of the philosophy taught in Qom, fourteen hundred years after the Prophet the Shiah were a minority among Muslims, and Muslims were very much a minority in the population of the world. If Islam in this broader sense did not exist widely and deeply outside the Islamic world, how could I help but feel that God had betrayed Islam?"

Western Self-Confidence

Other, and frequently more secularized, intellectuals were reading history differently in the 1960s and 1970s. "Iranian intellectuals," writes Mottahedeh, "were keenly and other Iranians were dimly aware that the West had lost its self-confidence. It was one thing to want to become a Westerner in the age when the West looked East through Kipling's *Kim*, quite another when it looked East through Hesse's *Siddhartha*." Throughout the Islamic world, there was then a sense that the moment of resurgence, including retribution, was at hand. That moment found expression in the Iranian revolution of 1979, when the Great Satan of America was, in Muslim eyes, brought to its knees. The secular intellectuals, of course, were deeply distressed by the religious regime of Khomeini. They had not counted on that. They "could not understand how a revolution so popular in origin should be so conservative in outcome." They failed to appreciate that the revolution was driven not simply by their anti-Western animus and nationalist passion but, more importantly, by religious devotion.

There is not, and probably should not be, another Kipling, but now the West may be looking East through the new world order. How the West looks East will again powerfully influence how the East looks West. There are many dynamics in play, shaping the relationship between Islam and a West that is, in tortuously ambiguous ways, still the Christian West. Certainly from the perspective of Qom, the West is, however decadently, the Christian West. On the world scene, Islam is outnumbered by Christianity almost two-to-one (approximately 800 million to 1.6 billion), and, despite some reports to

the contrary, it seems that Christianity is growing more rapidly. In addition to the religion factor, although not separable from it, recent developments have dealt a severe blow to notions of Islamic solidarity and, in particular, of Arab nationalism. Now and in the years ahead it seems likely that Islam will be looking at a West that will be looking at Islam with a restored sense of self-confidence.

If that self-confidence is not to degenerate into smugness and illusions of imperial omnipotence, it is important that our looking East be informed by a better understanding of Islam. Reports that books on Islam are selling briskly is therefore good news indeed. A good place to begin is with Shiite Islam, just because it is so influential in the two countries recently and violently hostile to the West, Iran and Iraq. And an excellent place to begin with Shiite Islam is Roy Mottahedeh's *The Mantle of the Prophet*.

FT

NO VALENTINES FOR JESUS

We shouldn't be surprised, but we still are from time to time, by evidences that most Americans are happily ignorant of continuing threats to the free exercise of religion. John Whitehead is founder of the Rutherford Institute, a Virginia-based civil liberties organization that is tirelessly in the trenches fighting on behalf of ordinary folk who are told that they are constitutionally required to keep their religion to themselves. Whitehead has written an extremely useful book on how these questions are joined in the schools. It is called *The Rights of Religious Persons in Public Education* and is published by Crossway Books in Wheaton, Illinois.

In Hartford, Wisconsin, a teacher urged third-grade pupils to "be creative" in making valentines to be displayed in the school hallway. One eight-year-old was apparently too creative, scribbling on her valentine, "I love Jesus" and "Jesus is what love is all about." The teacher said her valentine could not be displayed because of the religious message. The principal and superintendent backed the teacher, until Rutherford threatened a lawsuit. In Norman, Oklahoma, a half-dozen eleven-year-olds used their free time during recess to read the Bible and pray. Horrors! said the principal, who informed their parents that such religious practices are illegal. Rutherford is in court on that one. In Oswego, New York, a high school student was told that he could not perform his Christian "rap" routine in the school talent show. The superintendent relented after Rutherford intervened. Rapped Kenny Green: "My

name is Kenny Green, and I'm a Jesus machine. I love Jesus Christ for he is not mean. I became born again at the age of fourteen." Kenny received a standing ovation. (Score one for religious freedom, and one for the awfulness that is rap.)

In a number of municipalities, prolife groups are prevented from putting up their materials on public bulletin boards because it is "too controversial." Rutherford, with ACLU-like relentlessness, is on the scene, breathing threats of lawsuits right and left. Whitehead notes that many school districts continue to resist the Equal Access Act, passed by Congress seven years ago and upheld as constitutional by an 8-to-1 vote of the Supreme Court. Some officials have threatened to close down all non-curriculum-related student clubs rather than allow a religious club (an action unfortunately permitted by Supreme Court guidelines). In Philadelphia a teacher can be fired for wearing "any dress, mark, emblem, or insignia" of religious significance. And so it goes.

These are little matters, you say? Tell that to James Madison or Roger Williams. The right to believe what one will and to bear public testimony to that belief cuts to the heart of the American experiment in a free and just public order. It is never a little matter for those whose freedom of religion and conscience is being trampled. We do well to remember that the freedoms we tend to take for granted are, in disputes all around the country, being defended daily by organizations such as the Rutherford Institute, the Christian Legal Society, the Catholic League for Civil and Religious Liberty, Dean Kelley of New York and William Ball of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (each of whose prodigious energy is tantamount to that of an organization). Except for the rare fracas that catches the eye of the press, their work goes essentially unnoticed. So we thought it an appropriate time to take note, and say thank you.

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A FAITH BESIEGED BY SCIENCE

The story of Phillip E. Johnson's "Evolution as Dogma" in our October 1990 issue continues to unfold as orthodox evolutionists are increasingly assaulted by unfriendly scientific evidence. Much was made over the years, for example, of the fact that the viceroy butterfly resembles foul-tasting monarch butterflies. According to the "batesian" theory (after nineteenth-century naturalist Henry Walter Bates), the viceroy took on the appearance of monarchs to fool birds that might otherwise eat them. Now, for the first time, the theory has been tested, and the report published in the British journal *Nature* is that

birds deem viceroys as unpalatable as monarchs. "I think most biologists believed the batesian idea was set in stone," said Dr. Deane Bowers, entomologist at the University of Colorado. It's a "fairly dramatic finding," said Dr. Jim Miller, curator of moths and butterflies at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. "It kind of shows how some of the obvious things we've assumed have never been tested." Kind of does, doesn't it?

Then there's the report in the *New York Times* with the headline "Spectacular Fossils Record Early Riot of Creation." Fossil discoveries in China, "hailed as among the most spectacular in this century," turned up seventy species from the Cambrian period with "the appearance of increasingly complex marine animals in a riot of shapes and anatomical designs anticipating much of life as it is today." Unfortunately, there is no evidence of evolutionism's vaunted development linkages from one thing to another. Dr. Jan Bergstrom, paleontologist at the Swedish Museum of Natural History in Stockholm, said it seems that the Cambrian period was "a revolution perhaps more than evolution." Maybe even a "riot of creation"?

FT

THE HIGHER DISMISSIVENESS

Anthony Gottlieb reviews two more by Richard Rorty, perhaps the most discussed philosopher in the English-speaking world today. "His general attitude," writes Gottlieb, "is an instance of what might be called the higher dismissiveness. The trick is to lock up your opponents in some social, academic, or historical context and then to dismiss their views as mere rattling against the bars." Rorty's notion of "solidarity" requires him to be forever trying to place himself in the history of thought, writes Gottlieb. "Scattered throughout these essays are self-affixed labels such as 'we antirepresentationists,' 'we Western liberal intellectuals,' 'we partisans of solidarity,' 'we pragmatists,' 'we new fuzzies,' 'us shepherds of Being,' 'we enlightened post-Kuhnians,' 'we anti-essentialists,' 'we moderns,' 'we humans,' 'we bourgeois liberals,' 'we Deweyans,' 'we pragmatic Wittgensteinian therapists.'" In response to which, Gottlieb observes, "It is good to know where he stands."

Gottlieb suggests that Rorty is not quite so frivolous as he wants us to believe. "And how does Rorty propose to prevent the conversation of mankind from degenerating into the blathering of mankind? The Rortyan vision of heaven on earth, in

which people merely tell enlightening tales and abjure the search for truth, sounds like a gathering of tipsy old sea dogs swapping dimly remembered stories of past voyages of discovery. If the earlier explorers had all been Rortyan pragmatists, the sea dogs would have had nothing to reminisce about. Fortunately, Mr. Rorty is, despite himself, one of the old-fashioned explorers for much of the time. Just as his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* had plenty of old-style analytical philosophy to keep its readers happy while they read their own obituaries, so these essays are rich in old-fashioned argumentative criticism to brighten the *longueurs* of Rortyan 'conversation.' . . . You cannot effect a revolution merely by proclaiming that you are a revolutionary."

FT

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE NUNS?

In 1965 there were more than 180,000 Catholic sisters in religious communities in America. Today there are about 100,000—a decrease of 45 percent. Some are still leaving, there are very few new vocations, and the median age in women's institutes is now sixty-five or older. These are among the sobering realities examined by Sister Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., in a provocative article, "Beyond the Liberal Model: Quo Vadis?"

Writing in the *Review for the Religious*, Sr. Elizabeth observes: "Most women religious would admit that, in the quarter century since Vatican II, the rather short-lived euphoria of the 'nun in the world' has been replaced by a long-suffering, quiet frustration at the lurking possibility of permanent extinction. While increased relevancy and effectiveness were focal points for altering lifestyles and practices during renewal, many wonder now if women religious in America have ever been more irrelevant and less effective." She continues: "All this does not just *happen*. We did it to ourselves. Indeed, I would suggest that . . . major factors contributing to the current decline have been a certain lack of knowledge of both theology and history, as well as a certain lack of maturity in responding to newly discovered postconciliar realities."

All kinds of structural and psychological reasons are given for the decline. Sr. Elizabeth thinks it goes deeper than that. "Though many may reject the suggestion, perhaps love of Jesus Christ is simply not perceived as the underlying or determining factor in the life of many women religious in America." Some women call for a "creative disintegration" of

religious communities, but Sr. Elizabeth sees that as part of the “deconstruction” of important traditions. There is much more participatory decision-making than there used to be, but the result is an awful lot of time in meetings spent on political chit-chat and the approving of meaningless manifestos. “Such chapters commonly enact global, carefully crafted, blandly diluted statements whose content can hardly be opposed in theory and can scarcely be assessed in implementation.” That strikes us as an admirable description of a great deal that issues from the solemn assemblies of American religion across the denominational board.

Also applicable to much more than the plight of Catholic sisters is this devastating critique: “Tradition has been abandoned, and the past is perceived as oppressive. Institutes have become business corporations, and governance has become collaborative administration. Structures have become participative, and superiors are now primarily managers. Formation personnel and spiritual directors now function primarily as therapists. Facilitators are experts for achieving consensus formation, as well as catalysts for creative innovation. All members are becoming empowered for decision-making, although not many members claim responsibility for any particular decision. Obedience is increasingly negotiable, and personal fulfillment dominates most choices. Communities have become lifestyle enclaves composed of occasionally present, like-minded individuals. Everyone is now somehow accountable, but few (if any) religious are called to accountability by anyone for anything. Communication is the cardinal virtue, and everyone is progressing towards greater self-actualization. The problem is, of course: *It all simply does not work.* American women religious today still seem not to have discovered what it is that might assuage their longings, and the seriously ill social ecology of their lives is very much in danger of permanent demise.”

And so it goes. Sr. Elizabeth suggests that some communities should perhaps go out of existence. If they do not have a specific “charism” of radical Christian discipleship, what’s the point? She doesn’t think the “conservative” communities that resist the renewal of Vatican II are the answer, although they do sometimes attract more new vocations. She’s sure, however, that the “liberal model” has exhausted itself. The repeated demonstration that liberated nuns can be pretty much like everybody else in the culture has become an awful bore, not least of all to liberated nuns. (We expect that if you sent \$2 and return postage, Sr. Elizabeth McDonough would send you the complete article. P.O. Box 29260, Washington D.C. 20017. As aforesaid, while she is addressing Catholic sisters in particular, it is a first-rate analysis of what has gone awry in the many worlds of American religion, Protestant and Catholic.)

FT

THE REAL ESTABLISHMENT PROBLEM

Pastor Richard Niebanck of Maywood, New Jersey, opines that there is an established religion in America. Writing in *Forum Letter*, a Lutheran publication, he says the religion is variously named New Age, the Culture of Narcissism, Neo-Paganism, or Neo-Gnosticism. The big study by the City University of New York some months ago produced astonishment in some quarters that so very few Americans identified their religion as New Age. But it seems almost certain that that is because New Age and its variations have so successfully infiltrated the churches that many who identify themselves as Christian do not realize they have bought into a quite different religion. Niebanck says this:

“Because this ‘religious establishment’ has little if any institutional expression, there seems little hope of its being fought legally. For instance, a hypothetical public high school teacher who advanced New Age ideas and attitudes under a neutral or secular wrapping would be far less vulnerable to legal challenge than would be a teacher who spoke of God by name or who expounded on the biblical foundations of Western thought. To be more pointed, a psychotherapeutic reading of Shakespeare would be hard to challenge in court, but presenting Shakespeare’s view of human nature in terms of biblical realism would almost certainly be considered a violation of the establishment clause. Teaching theological ethics according to Snow White would not be seen as ‘teaching religion,’ but teaching ethics according to the Ten Commandments would.

“That this religion of many names has become culturally, if not legally, established is a public fact. The linguistic evidence is everywhere, most especially in the public media. Armed with a psycho-political newspeak, its priestly class presses its project of ‘redeeming’ reality by renaming it. And elites within the churches have dutifully fallen into step, giving religious sanction to the project of secular remythologizing.”

Niebanck says this established religion should not be confused with “civil religion.” As a Lutheran he has considerable respect for a civil religion or public philosophy that undergirds virtue in the public square (what Lutherans call “the left-hand kingdom of God”). The established religion that he critiques, however, “occupies public space [but] is essentially a parasitic destroyer of the public realm. It is an aspect of a privatistic consumer culture.” Tough stuff, that. And it has, as they say, the additional merit of being true.

FT

BY ANY OTHER NAME

Dr. Etienne-Emile Beaulieu, the French scientist who developed the RU-486 abortifacient pill, has declared, "My intent is to eliminate the word 'abortion' because that word is as traumatic as the fact itself of abortion." RU-486, which is not for sale in the U.S., blocks cells in the uterus from receiving the natural hormone progesterone, the function of which is to prepare the lining of the uterus to receive and sustain a fertilized egg. Without progesterone, the fertilized egg is lost. In place of "abortion," says Dr. Beaulieu, "I have proposed the term 'contragestion,' not to try to hide the real function of RU-486 but rather to avoid the fears and mental inhibitions that a charged terminology has introduced systematically."

Dr. Gonzalo Herranz is professor of bioethics at the University of Navarra in Spain and chairman of the Ethics Committee of the Spanish Medical Association. He cites Dr. Beaulieu's proposal as an instance of the banalizing of abortion. The use of RU-486, he writes, will have a dramatic effect on how people think about abortion, an effect that he describes in rather graphic terms:

"It will establish as an admitted social fact that the human embryo is a mere product of debris. Not only is the embryo made into a thing, stripping it of all its human value; it is reduced to the negative condition of an excrement. In the same way that a laxative is capable of freeing a sluggish colon of its fecal content, the new pill will enable the gestating uterus to free itself from the embryo growing in it. Disconnected from the mother through a clean mechanism of molecular competition between anti-hormones and hormones, and catapulted toward the network of sewage system through the action of specific stimulators of the uterine myosins, the embryo ends its existence in an unspectacular fashion. The transmission of human life, man's supreme capacity to co-create men, that sharing in God's creative power, will be converted into a function of the same physiological, psychological, and moral level as micturition or defecation."

FT

INCULTURATING WHAT CULTURE?

Most readers have probably not heard from Harvey (Secular City) Cox in a long while, but we'll take intelligent comment wherever we stumble across it, including this from *Christianity and Crisis*. It seems

Mr. Cox was attending a Baptist conference in Costa Rica and all the discussion there was about the importance of "inculturating" or "contextualizing" the Gospel. That got Cox to thinking some decidedly incorrect thoughts.

"The trouble with most currently popular theological inculturation theories is that they overlook two important things. One is that cultures can be stifling and oppressive to many of the people who have to live in them. The other is that cultures everywhere are changing at an accelerated speed even as we speak. Driving back from our engagingly cacophonous evening at the bistro, I began to worry: Will we end up trying to inculturate the Gospel into cultural patterns that many—maybe even most—people in the Third World countries want to get out of as soon as they can? And will we eventually find ourselves indigenized into quaintly cultivated preserves—the contemporary equivalents of the old mission compound—while the new syncretic but dynamic global culture leaves us far behind? It is a thought worth pondering."

Having gone that far in raining on the inculturation party, Cox goes on to suggest that intellectuals, even theologians, might be a mite more self-critical. "Remember, the Third World intellectuals who often lead the churches and seminaries in those countries are only human. Like many of their First World colleagues they sometimes wrestle down the displaced and rootless feelings they harbor by hankering for a largely imaginary folk culture that will resolve the painful contradictions that afflict them, and us. But I am convinced we must welcome and shape these contradictions, not flee them. Haltingly, and in spurts, a new global symbol system is coming into view. It is largely the creation of people under twenty-five, the majority of the world's population. It is ingenious, artful, and exciting. It is often subversive of existing dominant cultures. There will be losses, but it is fully capable of carrying into the future what is humanly valuable about the past, and not in the cultural equivalent of wildlife sanctuaries. It would be too bad if just as Christianity is becoming—for the first time—a truly world religion, we encased ourselves in the confines of a passing age instead of embracing the dangerous dawning of a new one." It may be evidence of something wrong with the way our mind works, but we almost thought we detected a ricochet of John Paul II's 1991 encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, in Mr. Cox's reflection. Or maybe Harvey Cox is just returning to his 1965 optimism about what a nice place he thinks the world is turning out to be.

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SEX ON THE MIND

The churches have sex on the mind and, as Chesterton observed, that is an odd place to have it. The editors of *The Economist* (June 29, 1991) opine that it is time for the churches to stiffen their spine a bit and act on the belief that they ought to believe in something other than being "inclusive" of every passing view. At the same time, they say, the churches could do a much better job when it comes to sex and marriage.

"In an age of disenchantment with churches, but also of great longing for stability, certainty, and meaning in life, 85 percent of people still marry. Marriages, of course, are only human; they go wrong and break down; but it is still within marriage, and the families that spring from marriage, that most people come closest to an understanding of true love and creativity, which is as close as man can get to God. This great mystery extends from Genesis through the marriage feast at Cana to the Pauline image of Christ as the bridegroom of the Church. Yet despite that, and despite the married ministers of the Protestant tradition, matrimony is the most ignored sacrament. It is ignored because sexual love, the love that came after the Fall, still keeps its taint of the second-rate."

After offering their advice on how that "taint" might be removed (optional celibacy for Catholic priests, for instance, and making clear to everybody that homosexual or heterosexual affairs, no matter how loving, are not anything like marriage), the editors conclude this way: "Once churches have examined their consciences, those whose sexual behaviour still falls beyond the pale should do so too. Is what they want really the rectification of an injustice, or a pulpit from which to plead a political cause? If it is the latter, they would be better off in politics or in their own kind of church in which they make the rules. If their faith makes it too painful to leave the church they have chosen, then they should stay as thousands have stayed before them: if priest, on the church's terms; if laymen, on the best compromise they can between God, their church, and their consciences. Such compromises do not need to be put on public display. Nor do they need to divert the churches from the enormous spiritual case-load that remains to be tackled in the world at large." All quite sensible, it seems.

The commentary is marred only by a passing reference to "a recent report" that claims that "as many as 50 percent of Catholic priests may be sexually active, either with women or with men." There was a book last year by a fellow who works with psychologically troubled priests. It stirred quite a little discussion. The upshot, as best we can make out, is that a large number of priests who seek help in this connection have, in the course of their lives,

had sexual relations. But the book provides no basis whatever for estimating the number of priests who are violating their celibacy vow. Priests, bishops, and counselors with whom we have talked conjecture that it is as low as 2 percent and as high as 10 percent. Nobody knows. In any event, the obvious fact that priests, too, behave in ways that are "beyond the pale" is no clinching argument for optional celibacy. In addition to the sensible points made by *The Economist*, one recalls that at the epicenter of the church's distinctive contribution is the message of sin and forgiveness.

FT

APOLOGIZING FOR THE FAITH

We were in Canada at the time, where the statement received enormous attention from the media. It touches on events also in this country having to do with the 1992 observance of the arrival of Europeans in the Americas. There are 1,200 members of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Canada. On July 24, the order officially issued "An Apology to Native Peoples." Apparently, the Oblates have much to apologize for. In recent years there have been much-publicized incidents of the sexual abuse of boys and girls in Oblate schools. The schooling system itself, set up in the last century, tore children away from their families in, as the statement puts it, an "attempt to assimilate aboriginal peoples." The July apology, however, goes far beyond practices that are clearly to be apologized for.

"As large-scale celebrations are being prepared to mark [1492], the Oblates of Canada wish, through this apology, to show solidarity with many native people in Canada whose history has been adversely affected by this event. Anthropological and sociological insights of the late-twentieth century have shown how deep, unchallenged, and damaging was the naive cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious superiority complex of Christian Europe when its peoples met and interrelated with the aboriginal peoples of North America. . . . We recognize that this mentality has from the beginning and ever since continually threatened the cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions of the native peoples."

The missionary enterprise was one of "systemic imperialism," the 3,000 word statement declares. Reflecting on their own history, the Oblates acknowledge the "many men and women, native and white alike, who gave their lives and their very blood in a dedication that was most sincere and heroic." Sincere and heroic, but utterly wrongheaded. The

statement says it is “honoring” these people “despite their mistakes” and “the past blindness” of the order. It concludes with solemn pledges of reform: “We want to denounce imperialism in all its forms and concomitantly pledge ourselves to work with native peoples in their efforts to recover their lands, their languages, their sacred traditions, and their rightful pride. . . . Despite past mistakes and many present tensions, the Oblates have felt all along as if the native peoples and we belonged to the same family.” The Oblates declare that they “renew the commitment we made 150 years ago to work with and for native peoples,” and they do so “in the spirit of our founder, Blessed Eugene de Mazenod, and the many dedicated missionaries” of the past.

The statement, which we would like to think does not reflect the views of all the members of the order, is noteworthy in many respects. It gives a quite new meaning to “apology for the faith” (as in *apologia*). One might also note the irony of using ideas that are undeniably constructs of Western culture—solidarity, anti-imperialism, self-esteem, the universal family of humankind, respect for pluralism—to condemn the influence of Western culture. If imperialism means, as the statement suggests, challenging ideas and patterns of behavior with other ideas and patterns of behavior, “An Apology to Native Peoples” is an instance of thoroughgoing imperialism. It is a frontal assault on the constituting ideas of the Christian missionary enterprise (including, of course, the original enterprise of the Oblates) and could hardly be more alien to thought patterns indigenous to the native peoples of this continent. The statement perfectly reflects the mindset that John Murray Cuddihy brilliantly analyzed in *No Offense* as “the Protestant etiquette” that is determined not to raise awkward questions that might make others uncomfortable. The etiquette itself, of course, offends those who believe that ideas have an uncomfortable way of making a difference.

A Yet Greater Betrayal

Most notably, however, the statement not once mentions God, Christ, the Gospel, the sacraments, saving grace, or eternal life. “Anthropological and sociological insights of the late-twentieth century” have presumably demonstrated that it is not true—as Eugene de Mazenod and his colleagues undoubtedly thought it was true—that Christ is Lord and Christians are to be in the business of calling others to faith in Him. The Oblate statement repeatedly puts “cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions” in the same category and on the same level. The Oblates apologize for the missionaries having “threatened” those traditions. But of course the assertion that Christ is Lord “threatens” the religion of those who do not think Christ is Lord. It is a cognitive challenge, it can be painful, it gives offense. One way

to avoid the challenge, the pain, and the offense is simply not to assert that Christ is Lord.

The Oblates declare their rejection of “the premise that European languages, traditions, and religious practices [are] superior to native languages, traditions, and religious practices.” But if the Mediterranean (not European) message that the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus is the one true God is not “superior,” in the sense of being true, one must wonder what is the mission of the *Missionary Oblates*. One might also wonder what the many Native Americans who converted to Christianity think about now being told that they were cruelly duped and should have stayed with their indigenous beliefs. Having abandoned the Christian mission, the Oblates “pledge to native peoples our service.” They acknowledge that they are not sure what that means. “We ask help in more judiciously discerning what forms that service might take today.”

Admittedly, 1492 and its consequences is a subject riddled with moral ambiguities. The question of missionary encounter with non-Christian cultures and truth claims is also, as it is inevitably said, very complex. As discussed in these pages last month, those complexities are imaginatively addressed by Pope John Paul II in his recent encyclical on missions (*Redemptoris Missio*). The Oblate statement takes the cheap way out from such complexities by embracing a thoroughly “European” brand of mindless relativism. Among Catholics today, and especially in various aging religious orders, there is interminable discussion about the “crisis of declining vocations.” The truth must be told: Young men and women are not inspired to commit themselves to communities that do not deserve their commitment—to communities that do not themselves know what they are committed to. It is very hard to imagine people giving “their lives and their very blood in dedication” to a community that, in a posture of abject self-denigration, is sniffing around in search of “what forms its service might take today.” Without reference to Christ and the Gospel, bland chatter about Christian mission is simply pathetic. It would seem that the Oblates, and too many communities like them, have betrayed a greater trust and have more to apologize for than they have even begun to ponder.

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THE CASE OF MIRCEA ELIADE

A rambling, eight-page article in *The New Republic* (August 5) attacks the late Mircea Eliade for having been a fascist and supporter of Romania’s notorious

"Iron Guard" in the 1930s. Eliade, who was for many years at the University of Chicago, will be familiar to most readers as the author of the four-volume *A History of Religious Ideas* and numerous other books dealing with religion and myth in human history. The editors of *TNR* declare that "the scandal of the Romanian intellectual Mircea Eliade's past is greater than Paul de Man's, and helps explain the tragedy of his homeland."

That seems far from fair. De Man, the godfather of literary deconstructionism, wrote pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic articles during the war years, when the evil of Hitlerism was evident for all to see. In addition, de Man's fanciful reinterpretation of his own past seriously implicates his deconstructionist theories. The *TNR* indictment of Eliade, on the other hand, produces as evidence statements from no later than 1938 in which he excoriates Western democracy and identifies with movements aimed at nationalist resurgence. Such views were commonplace in most of Europe at the time, and had intellectual proponents also in this country who believed democracy to be a decadent and discredited form of government.

In light of the horror produced by the extreme nationalism he favored, it is not only easy but necessary to condemn many of the views espoused by Eliade in the 1930s. The *TNR* indictment is also correct in noting that Eliade was very much less than candid in his autobiographies when he discussed, marginally, the political aspects of his past. But the indictment does not amount to much more than that. It is perfectly legitimate to explore who was on "the wrong side" of the great conflicts of this century (we eagerly look forward to the opening of KGB files that may tell us who the Soviets thought to be their friends and instruments in the West). In the process, however, great care must be taken not to besmirch reputations unjustly.

Mircea Eliade was not a political actor or philosopher. In the 1930s he befriended exponents of a Romanian nationalism that later served the horrors of Nazism. In his time in America, Eliade was reticent, and sometimes evasive, about that aspect of his past. This may be a character flaw in someone who writes autobiographies purporting to be true accounts, although even on that score more charitable interpretations are possible (politics of any sort didn't seem to be very important in the life and thinking of Eliade). Very much unlike the case of Paul de Man and deconstructionism, the *TNR* exposé does not succeed in discrediting the person and important work of Mircea Eliade.

FT

WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you odd." We have heard that attributed to G.K. Chesterton, but then, as with Churchill, so much is attributed to Chesterton. A learned friend says she is rather sure that Dorothy Sayers said it first. In any event, it has the ring of truth. And it applies to Basil Mitchell, for many years professor of Christianity at Oxford. He is odd in all the nicest ways—whimsical, more than a little out of step with the times, and marvelously content to say what he has to say, in season and out. Much of what he has to say is delightfully put together in a small paperback now out from Eerdmans, *How to Play Theological Ping-Pong: Essays on Faith and Reason*. There is, for instance, the conclusion to a C. S. Lewis Lecture on Christian apologetics: "This means, of course, that we need to rethink the Christian basis for a liberal society, in which the rights of individuals and communities are founded upon a Christian understanding of man which is widely shared by non-Christians. It is not adequate to regard Christianity as a purely personal matter having no social implications. The case for freedom is based not upon the absence of any reason for preferring one ideal to another but upon the positive conviction that men have the right and the duty to follow their consciences and to promote the common good. It is no more likely in politics than it is in the institutional life of the Church that we shall achieve a Christian consensus. Christians will continue to differ in their political emphasis, and it may be a good thing that this should be so. But in each case there is an overriding demand for the exercise of charity, not only out of consideration for others but also out of concern for the truth which transcends our best endeavors to define it." Those whom this new collection may hook on Mitchell will want to look also at his *Morality Religious and Secular* (Oxford), published in 1980 and, in our judgment, unfairly neglected on this side of the sea.

■ The Vatican has been exceedingly cool toward the World Council of Churches (WCC) for some years. A journalist recently noted that the Vatican comes out of Eastern Europe's Revolution of 1989 looking considerably better than the WCC, which had worked so closely over the years with sundry Communist regimes. Dr. Emil Castro, general secretary of the WCC, responded that his organization "is not in a beauty contest with the Vatican." "Let the past be judged by God in His mercy," said Castro. He added that the WCC had worked only with churches, never with Communist regimes. He did not add that those churches were wholly owned and controlled subsidiaries of their governments, and that the WCC well knew that.

■ This is the publishers' catalog season. We see that

Philip (*The Pursuit of Loneliness*) Slater has a new one coming out from Beacon Press. It's called *A Dream Deferred* and we're told that it addresses these questions: "Why do Americans admire secrecy in government? Why do we listen to authority figures even when we know they are wrong? Why do we so often seek the quick-fix military solution?" And then this: "Why has owning a dishwasher become the American Dream?" Why indeed?

■ Inter-Faith Network, a British venture, has produced a statement on interreligious relations agreed to by Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and just about everybody else. Anglican Bishop Jim Thompson says the group is "concerned to celebrate the differences between religions, not minimize them." According to *The Tablet*, "God is not mentioned in the statement, which links both theistic and nontheistic religions. Reference is made, however, to 'a Reality which infinitely transcends all that we can see, touch, smell, taste, and hear.' " It seems the "Reality" transcends language as well. We gather that a difference not to be "celebrated" is that at least one religion names the Name.

■ Just when you thought it was safe to go to church again, our ever-alert federal government has espied another threat. Legislation is proposed to ban lead use in consumer goods, and the Environmental Protection Agency is taking a close look at stained glass windows. According to *Crux*, a newsletter published in Albany, New York, federal action could affect 100,000 jobs in 30,000 glass studios nationwide. At the risk of violating the separation of church and state, one may hope that the gaze of the EPA will extend beyond the lead in the windows in question, and thus a measure of sanity, if not sanctity, might yet deter our misguided protectors.

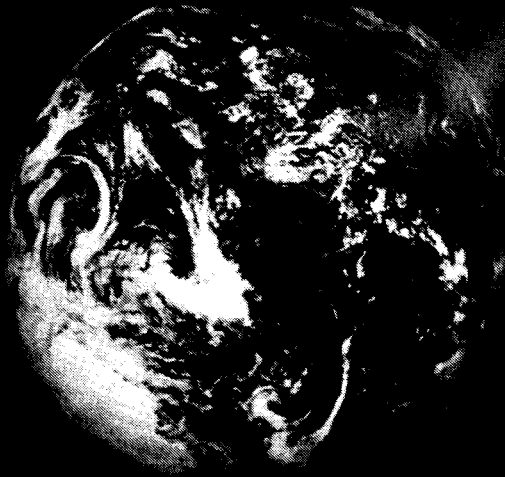
■ So, having heaped upon the National Council of Churches' screed against the celebration of the 500th anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the Americas a small measure of the derision that it deserves ("Repenting of America 1492-1992," October 1990), we are asked how Christians should think about the occasion. We are not at a loss for an answer, thanks to Bishop James A. Griffin of Columbus, Ohio. His pastoral letter, "Horizons of Faith," treats what Catholics are calling the Fifth Centenary of the Evangelization of the Americas with admirable clarity and nuance. The shadows and horrors of what happened since 1492 are there, along with the nobility, the heroism, the achievements, and the continuing lessons for our day. If you write to Bishop Griffin and ask for "Horizons of Faith," we are quite sure that he would be glad to send you a copy. The

address is Diocese of Columbus, 198 E. Broad Street, Columbus, OH 43215.

■ A colleague reports that at the Jersey shore in August there were the usual advertisements that airplanes flying over the beach pull behind them—"Eat at Joe's," "Listen to WABC-FM," that sort of thing. But then there was an airplane trailing this: "Pay Your Child Support!" It is not known whether this was intended as a general admonition or directed to a deadbeat in particular. If the latter, it would seem that whoever hired the plane was not in dire financial straits. In any event, a little guilt at the beach may not be a bad thing.

■ John Updike once wrote interestingly about Karl Barth. That endeared him to many more seriously Christian readers. There is the other factor, of course; that he almost always writes so interestingly about almost anything. Those who have worked their way through the thousands of pages about Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom may suspect that Updike is daring his literary talent to write interestingly about such exceedingly uninteresting people. Now, in *Rabbit at Rest*, Harry comes to the end of the banalities Mr. Updike, if not Harry, took to be his life of angst. On the hospital bed where he is dying, Harry's last words are to his son, "Well, Nelson, all I can tell you is, it isn't so bad." Updike adds, "Rabbit thinks he should maybe say more, the kid looks wildly expectant, but enough. Maybe. Enough." The last "enough" may be Harry's, or it may be the author's, or it may be the author agreeing with Harry. Mr. Updike does not say. One wants to believe that the author who was so taken with Karl Barth does not think it is enough. One wants to believe that his intention in depicting lives so soulless as Harry's is to prompt the reader to recognize that it is not enough. But Mr. Updike does not say. Such reticence is the mark of a fine writer, the critic says. Perhaps so. Certainly Mr. Updike does not offend by preaching. But one is left with the uneasy feeling that he does not preach, not because it is bad form, but because he has nothing more to say.

Sources: On butterflies, the *New York Times*, April 16, 1991, and on fossils, April 23, 1991. Gottlieb on Rorty in the *New York Times Book Review*, June 2, 1991. On the decreasing number of nuns, *Review for Religious*, March-April 1991. Niebanck on established religion in *Forum Letter*, August 15, 1991. Dr. Herranz on RU-486 in *Catholic International*, July 15-30, 1991. "An Apology to Native Peoples" reprinted in *Origins*, August 15, 1991. On the WCC and Communist-controlled churches, *National Christian Reporter*, December 21, 1990. On Inter-Faith Network, *The Tablet*, March 23, 1991.



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